



Exploring EFL Lecturers' Perceptions of English Songs as a Pedagogical Tool for Developing Listening Skills

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Abstract This study explores EFL lecturers' perceptions of English songs as a pedagogical tool for developing students' listening skills in a university setting. Employing a qualitative narrative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three English lecturers from the same department. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in participants' experiences and viewpoints. Findings reveal that all lecturers hold positive attitudes toward integrating English songs into listening classes, citing increased student motivation, engagement, and participation. Participants reported that songs, when carefully selected for linguistic clarity, cultural relevance, and student interest, enhance comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and listening proficiency. Challenges noted include fast speech in song lyrics, limited vocabulary, and technical constraints in classroom facilities. The results suggest that English songs not only serve as an enjoyable learning medium but also foster a cooperative and interactive classroom environment. The study underscores the importance of song selection criteria and supports the integration of music-based resources in EFL listening pedagogy. Recommendations for practice and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: English songs, EFL listening, pedagogical tools, lecturers' perceptions, motivation.

DOI:**Introduction**

Listening is a fundamental component of language acquisition, serving as the gateway to meaningful communication (Gass, 1997; Slamet, 2008). However, learners often encounter persistent challenges in developing listening proficiency, such as rapid speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and varied accents, all of which can hinder comprehension (Jaen, 2019). In EFL contexts, these challenges are compounded by the need for lecturers to sustain learner motivation and engagement, particularly in instructional settings that risk becoming monotonous or overly teacher-centered. Effective listening pedagogy, therefore, must balance linguistic rigor with engaging learning experiences that maintain students' attention and foster active participation.

One pedagogical tool that has gained attention in recent years is the integration of English songs into listening instruction. Songs are not merely a form of entertainment; their lyrics often embed authentic language use, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances that enrich listening input (Shen, 2009; Bokiev et al., 2018). By presenting language in a rhythmic, repetitive, and emotionally engaging format, songs can promote both cognitive and affective aspects of learning. Empirical research supports this potential. For instance, Liando, Oey, and Rorimpandey (2023) reported that junior high school students' English listening scores improved significantly—from a mean of 57.8 in the pre-test to 81.6 in the post-test—after participating in song-based listening activities. Similarly, Butar and Katemba (2023) found that both secondary and tertiary EFL students held positive attitudes toward learning vocabulary through English songs on Spotify, noting that the combination of music and language learning fostered greater motivation and enjoyment.

The affective benefits of songs are further supported by qualitative findings. Melisa, Silviyanti, and Syamaun (2023) demonstrated that using songs in junior high listening lessons promoted positive affective engagement, as evidenced by increased enthusiasm, active participation, and a supportive classroom atmosphere. Complementing this, a recent study in *Frontiers in Education* (Kim, Chong, & Lee, 2024) revealed that music listening in language learning contexts can reduce anxiety and enhance emotional stability, thereby making learners more receptive to linguistic input. Such findings suggest that the benefits of incorporating songs extend beyond skill development to include emotional and psychological advantages that are essential for sustained language learning.

Despite the growing body of research, the majority of studies focus on students' experiences or on controlled interventions at the primary and secondary levels. Far less attention has been given to lecturers' perceptions, particularly in higher education contexts where teaching dynamics differ significantly from those in younger classrooms. At the university level, learners are generally more autonomous, classroom activities are more academically oriented, and material selection demands greater consideration of linguistic complexity, cultural appropriateness, and learner preferences. Given that lecturers' beliefs and pedagogical decisions directly influence the learning environment, understanding their perspectives is crucial for effectively integrating songs into EFL listening pedagogy.

Furthermore, the effective use of songs in listening instruction requires careful selection. Factors such as linguistic clarity, cultural relevance, thematic alignment with lesson objectives, and student interest must be considered (Bokiev et al., 2018). Neglecting these considerations may result in materials that are linguistically inaccessible or culturally inappropriate, thereby undermining the potential benefits. While some studies acknowledge these factors from the

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learner's standpoint, research that examines them from the lecturer's perspective remains scarce. This gap limits our understanding of how and why songs are selected, how they are implemented in university classrooms, and how lecturers perceive their impact on students' listening development.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring university EFL lecturers' perceptions of English songs as a pedagogical tool for developing listening skills. Specifically, it investigates lecturers' attitudes toward using songs in listening instruction, the pedagogical considerations guiding their selection and implementation, and their views on the effects of songs on students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension. By focusing on the teacher's perspective, this research offers valuable insights into the decision-making processes underlying song-based pedagogy in higher education. It also contributes to the broader literature on innovative listening instruction by integrating both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

In doing so, the study seeks to advance understanding of how music-based resources can be effectively incorporated into EFL listening classrooms at the tertiary level. It aims to provide evidence-informed recommendations for lecturers who wish to use English songs not only as a means of enhancing listening skills but also as a tool for fostering a cooperative, motivating, and culturally sensitive learning environment.

Literature Review***Songs as a Pedagogical Tool for Listening Skills***

In language learning, listening is an active process that involves decoding sounds, recognizing words, and constructing meaning from spoken input (Gass, 1997). Songs have been recognized as an effective medium for supporting this process because they present authentic language in a structured, repetitive, and engaging format. The rhythm and melody of songs aid memory retention by creating strong auditory associations, enabling learners to recall vocabulary and phrases more easily (Shen, 2009). Moreover, songs often incorporate natural pronunciation, connected speech, and varied intonation patterns, offering learners valuable exposure to real-life language use (Bokiev et al., 2018).

From an affective perspective, songs can reduce the anxiety often associated with listening tasks, making learners more willing to engage with the material (Krashen, 1982). This aligns with the affective filter hypothesis, which posits that a relaxed and motivated learner processes language input more effectively. Songs also promote cultural awareness, as lyrics frequently reflect the social values, idiomatic expressions, and communicative styles of the target language community (Kim, Chong, & Lee, 2024). These cultural elements enrich learners' listening experiences by situating language in its authentic context.

Challenges in Using Songs for Listening Instruction

Despite their pedagogical potential, integrating songs into listening instruction is not without challenges. One of the most cited issues is the complexity of lyrics. Songs may contain idiomatic phrases, slang, or poetic expressions that are unfamiliar to learners, making comprehension difficult (Annuri et al., 2025). Additionally, pronunciation in songs can be stylized or influenced by regional accents, potentially confusing students who are still developing foundational listening skills (Fuekfon & Thumawongsa, 2023).

The speed of delivery is another concern. Many songs feature rapid articulation, elisions, or non-standard grammatical structures that can overwhelm learners with lower proficiency levels. Beyond linguistic challenges, cultural appropriateness is a critical factor; songs may include

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themes, vocabulary, or references that conflict with students' cultural or religious norms (Bokiev et al., 2018). Teachers must therefore be selective, ensuring that chosen materials align with both learning objectives and the learners' sociocultural context.

Practical constraints can also limit effective implementation. Technical problems, such as inadequate audio equipment or poor sound quality, can hinder listening comprehension. Time constraints within lesson plans may further restrict opportunities for pre-listening activities, repeated listening, or follow-up tasks that consolidate learning (Annuri et al., 2025). These challenges highlight the need for deliberate pedagogical planning when using songs in the EFL classroom.

A growing body of empirical research supports the effectiveness of songs in enhancing listening skills. Yayu Sri Rahayu and Rifansyah (2022) conducted a one-group pretest–posttest study among vocational high school students and found significant gains in listening comprehension scores following a series of song-based lessons. Learners also reported greater motivation and improved vocabulary retention. Similarly, Le Thi Van Anh (2023) observed that non-English majors at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry exhibited higher engagement and comprehension after song-based listening sessions, attributing the improvement to the songs' repetitive and enjoyable nature.

In a more targeted study, Fuekfon and Thumawongsa (2023) investigated the impact of English songs on Thai ninth graders' awareness of linking sounds. They found that the musical rhythm and repetition in songs facilitated learners' ability to recognize and reproduce connected speech patterns. On the qualitative side, Annuri et al. (2025) explored high school EFL teachers' perceptions of using songs in listening classes. Their findings revealed overwhelmingly positive attitudes but also noted the challenges of complex language, cultural appropriateness, and lesson preparation time.

At the tertiary level, Lengkoan (2022) implemented classroom action research with university students, demonstrating that songs not only improved listening proficiency but also boosted pronunciation and speaking confidence. The cyclical improvement observed across intervention stages suggests that songs can serve as a sustainable long-term pedagogical resource rather than a one-off engagement tool.

Taken together, these studies affirm that songs can significantly enhance listening comprehension, pronunciation, and learner engagement. However, they also underscore that success depends on careful song selection, alignment with instructional goals, and strategies to address linguistic and cultural challenges. While previous research has largely focused on students' outcomes, fewer studies have examined how lecturers, especially in university contexts, perceive and implement songs in their teaching. This gap provides the basis for the present study, which seeks to explore lecturers' perspectives to inform more effective, contextually appropriate integration of songs into EFL listening instruction.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative narrative research design to explore university EFL lecturers' perceptions of using English songs as a pedagogical tool for developing students' listening skills. Narrative research was chosen because it enables in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, personal insights, and professional practices in a real educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is particularly appropriate when the aim is to capture rich, descriptive accounts that reflect individual perspectives rather than to generalize findings to a wider population.

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The study involved three EFL lecturers from the same English Education Department at a private university in Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on two inclusion criteria: (1) a minimum of three years' experience teaching listening courses in an EFL context, and (2) prior experience using English songs as part of their listening instruction. All participants volunteered to join the study after being informed of its purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms (T1, T2, and T3) were used throughout the reporting of findings.

The participants varied in teaching experience, with ranges between 5 and 15 years, and had exposure to teaching both lower- and upper-year undergraduate students. This diversity of experience allowed for nuanced insights into the perceived benefits, challenges, and decision-making processes associated with using songs in the classroom.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, enabling the researcher to elicit detailed and focused responses while also allowing flexibility for follow-up questions (Bryman, 2016). An interview guide consisting of six open-ended questions was developed based on relevant literature on music-based language learning (Bokiev et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2024). The questions covered three main areas:

1. Challenges encountered when teaching listening skills.
2. Experiences and considerations in using songs as listening materials.
3. Perceived impacts of song-based activities on students' listening development, motivation, and classroom engagement.

Each interview lasted approximately 40–50 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in a quiet setting on campus. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of the data. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, contextual details, and reflections during the interview process.

The interview data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) Interactive Model, which involves three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was conducted by transcribing the interviews verbatim, coding relevant statements, and grouping them into categories aligned with the research focus. Data display was carried out by organizing the coded information into matrices to identify patterns and relationships across participants. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting the displayed data, cross-checking findings with the original transcripts, and confirming their validity through peer review. This iterative process ensured that the results were grounded in the evidence collected.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the interviews with three EFL lecturers revealed three major themes regarding the use of English songs in listening instruction: (1) Challenges in Teaching Listening Skills, (2) Pedagogical Value of Songs, and (3) Contributions of Songs to Students' Listening Development

Challenges in Teaching Listening Skills

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All participants identified multiple challenges when teaching listening, both with and without the use of songs. The primary issues included the speed of speech, difficulty in recognizing words, and limited vocabulary among students. For example, T1 explained:

“The main difficulties I face are students not getting the words correctly or hearing them right.”

T3 further noted that students struggled with *“new vocabulary, dialect, and native speakers’ fast speech,”* which made detailed comprehension difficult. These observations align with Jaen’s (2019) finding that EFL students often face comprehension problems due to speech rate and accent variation.

Technical limitations, such as malfunctioning equipment, also posed barriers. T2 shared, *“I don’t really have difficulties while using songs in class, except some lab’s computers that are out of order.”* This confirms Bokiev et al.’s (2018) observation that logistical issues can hinder the effective use of multimedia resources in EFL classrooms.

Pedagogical Values of Songs

All participants reported positive attitudes toward using English songs in their listening classes, highlighting their ability to engage and motivate students. T1 stated simply:

“Yeah, they enjoy listening to songs.”

T2 observed that *“students are motivated to listen when they know it is a song,”* while T3 remarked that *“most of the time, they are excited as they like songs.”* These responses reflect earlier studies (Butar & Katemba, 2023; Melisa et al., 2023) showing that music creates a more enjoyable and interactive learning atmosphere.

However, participants emphasized the importance of selecting appropriate songs. T3 recommended considering *“natural speech”* and *“students’ interest”* to ensure the song’s meaning is accessible. Similarly, T2 mentioned avoiding songs that conflict with *“culture, religion, and traditions”* and aligning them with the lesson topic. These considerations echo Fuekfon and Thumawongsa’s (2023) conclusion that song selection must account for linguistic accessibility and cultural appropriateness.

Contributions of Songs to Students’ Listening Development

All lecturers agreed that English songs can enhance students’ listening skills. T1 commented:

“Listening to songs can improve students’ listening skill. Through song, students enhance their listening as well as their comprehension.”

T2 described the impact as *“undoubtedly positive,”* and T3 expressed strong agreement, noting that songs improve listening proficiency while creating a *“fun, cooperative, and integrative classroom movement.”*

These findings are consistent with Liando et al. (2023), who found significant improvement in listening scores after integrating songs into classroom activities. Moreover, they align with Krashen’s (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which posits that enjoyable activities lower anxiety, increase motivation, and facilitate language acquisition.

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Overall, the lecturers' responses confirm that English songs serve a dual function in listening pedagogy: enhancing students' cognitive development through improved listening comprehension and vocabulary, and supporting affective engagement by increasing motivation and enjoyment. However, these benefits depend heavily on careful song selection that balances linguistic accessibility, cultural appropriateness, and curricular relevance (Annuri et al., 2025). By retaining the authentic voices of lecturers through their interview transcripts, this study underscores the practical realities of using songs in the EFL listening classroom. The results reinforce the need for deliberate, culturally sensitive implementation to maximize both engagement and learning outcomes.

Conclusions

This study explored university EFL lecturers' perceptions of using English songs as a pedagogical tool for developing students' listening skills. The findings revealed that all participants held positive attitudes toward incorporating songs in listening classes, recognizing their potential to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension. Lecturers observed that songs, when carefully selected for linguistic clarity, cultural appropriateness, and thematic relevance, can help students overcome listening challenges such as limited vocabulary, difficulty recognizing words, and rapid speech.

The results also indicated that songs contribute not only to cognitive development, such as improved listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, but also to affective engagement by fostering a more enjoyable and cooperative classroom atmosphere. These findings echo earlier studies (e.g., Bokiev et al., 2018; Liando et al., 2023) and support the integration of music-based resources in EFL listening pedagogy.

However, the study also highlights that effective use of songs requires careful planning and thoughtful implementation. Factors such as cultural sensitivity, students' interests, and technical readiness must be considered to ensure that songs support rather than hinder the learning process. This suggests that while songs can be a powerful tool in listening instruction, their success depends on the lecturer's ability to balance creativity with pedagogical appropriateness.

From a practical perspective, the insights gained from this research can guide lecturers in higher education to design listening activities that are both engaging and educational. By selecting songs that align with learning objectives and students' linguistic levels, lecturers can create a learning environment that supports skill development while maintaining student interest.

For future research, similar studies could involve larger and more diverse participant groups across different institutions to broaden the understanding of lecturers' perspectives. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore the sustained impact of song-based instruction on students' listening proficiency and overall language learning.

In conclusion, English songs, when used strategically, can serve as an effective and enjoyable medium for teaching listening skills in EFL contexts. They offer a means to bridge linguistic and cultural knowledge, reduce listening anxiety, and create a classroom environment conducive to active and motivated learning.

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