

**FROM MELODY TO MEANING: EXPLORING MOTIVATION,
ENGAGEMENT, AND DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH-SONG
BASED LISTENING FOR INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS**

SKRIPSI



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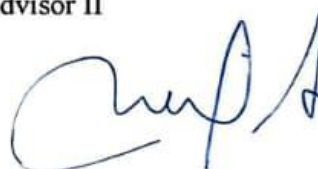
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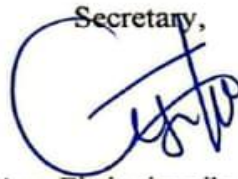
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MOTTO

“You don’t have to have everything right now, but you must keep fighting and believe that you can achieve it someday.”

(Kamu tidak harus memiliki segalanya saat ini, tapi kamu harus terus berjuang dan percaya bahwa kamu bisa mencapainya suatu hari nanti.)

“It’s not the difficulty that makes us afraid, but the fear that makes us difficult.”
(Bukan kesulitan yang membuat kita takut, tapi ketakutan yang membuat kita sulit.)

~ **Ali bin Abi Thalib** ~

“Success does not belong to the intelligent, but to those who constantly strive.”
(Keberhasilan bukanlah milik orang pintar, tetapi milik mereka yang senantiasa berusaha.)

~ **B.J Habibie** ~

“Sepiro gedhening sengsoro yen tinompo amung dadi coba.”
(Sebesar apapun penderitaan jika diterima dengan hati yang Ikhlas maka hanya akan menjadi cobaan semata.)

“Everything will be beautiful in its time.”
(Semua akan indah pada waktunya.)

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I realize that this skripsi could not have been completed without the support, guidance, encouragement, and prayers of many people. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to:

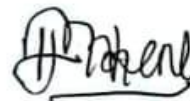
1. Allah SWT, for His endless mercy, blessings, and guidance throughout every step of my academic journey.
2. My beloved parents and family, for their unconditional love, endless prayers, sacrifices, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout my study.
3. Dr. Junarti, M.Pd., As the Rector of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro.
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11. And everyone who has directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this skripsi but whose names cannot be mentioned individually.

Finally, I realize that this skripsi is still far from perfect. Therefore, I sincerely welcome any constructive criticism and suggestions for its improvement. I hope that this skripsi will provide meaningful contributions to the field of English language teaching, particularly in listening instruction through English songs, and become a useful reference for future researchers.

Bojonegoro, 7 July 2026

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In order to uphold academic integrity, sincerely and without coercion from any parties, I hereby declare that the thesis entitled:

FROM MELODY TO MEANING: EXPLORING MOTIVATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH-SONG BASED LISTENING FOR INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

Is the result of my own original work, and all sources of information used have been clearly cited in the reference list according to the scientific and academic code of ethics. I am aware that if any violations of scholarly ethics regarding to the authenticity of this work are found, I **personally** accept the consequences in accordance with the applicable regulations and am prepared to bear legal sanctions.

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ABSTRACT

Mahendra, Riza Maulana. 2026. *From Melody to Meaning: Exploring Motivation, Engagement, and Difficulties in English-Song Based Listening for Intermediate EFL Learners*. Undergraduate Thesis, English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Advisors: (I) Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd. (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Listening comprehension is an essential yet challenging skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly when authentic materials such as English songs are used. Although songs can enhance learners' motivation and classroom engagement, they also present linguistic and cognitive challenges that may hinder comprehension. This study aimed to explore: (1) how English songs influence the motivation and engagement of intermediate EFL learners in listening comprehension activities; (2) the specific difficulties encountered during song-based listening; and (3) the strategies learners employ to overcome those difficulties. This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study design. The research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Cepu involving approximately 23 eleventh-grade students as the primary participants and one English teacher as a supporting informant. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. The findings revealed that English songs positively enhanced students' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement by creating a more enjoyable, relaxed, and interactive learning environment. However, students also experienced several listening difficulties, including fast tempo, connected speech, unclear pronunciation, unfamiliar vocabulary, and background music interference. To address these challenges, learners applied repeated listening, lyric worksheets, contextual guessing, and peer discussion. The study concludes that English songs are valuable authentic materials for improving listening motivation and engagement when supported by appropriate instructional strategies that help learners overcome comprehension difficulties.

Keywords: English songs, listening comprehension, motivation, engagement, listening difficulties.

ABSTRAK

Mahendra, Riza Maulana. 2026. *From Melody to Meaning: Exploring Motivation, Engagement, and Difficulties in English-Song Based Listening for Intermediate EFL Learners*. Skripsi, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Pembimbing: (I) Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd. (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Kemampuan menyimak (listening comprehension) merupakan salah satu keterampilan berbahasa Inggris yang penting sekaligus menantang bagi pembelajar English as a Foreign Language (EFL), terutama ketika menggunakan materi autentik seperti lagu berbahasa Inggris. Meskipun lagu mampu meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan peserta didik dalam pembelajaran, lagu juga menghadirkan berbagai tantangan linguistik dan kognitif yang dapat menghambat pemahaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengeksplorasi pengaruh penggunaan lagu berbahasa Inggris terhadap motivasi dan keterlibatan peserta didik EFL tingkat intermediate dalam kegiatan listening comprehension; (2) mengidentifikasi kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi peserta didik selama pembelajaran listening berbasis lagu; serta (3) mendeskripsikan strategi yang digunakan peserta didik untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian dilaksanakan di SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Cepu dengan melibatkan sekitar 23 peserta didik kelas XI sebagai partisipan utama dan seorang guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai informan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi, member checking, dan prolonged engagement. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan lagu berbahasa Inggris mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan perilaku, emosional, dan kognitif peserta didik dengan menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih menyenangkan, santai, dan interaktif. Namun, peserta didik juga mengalami kesulitan berupa tempo lagu yang cepat, connected speech, pengucapan yang kurang jelas, kosakata yang tidak familiar, serta gangguan musik latar. Untuk mengatasinya, peserta didik menerapkan strategi mendengarkan berulang, menggunakan lembar lirik, menebak makna berdasarkan konteks, dan berdiskusi dengan teman sebaya. Dengan demikian, lagu berbahasa Inggris merupakan materi autentik yang efektif dalam meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan peserta didik apabila didukung oleh strategi pembelajaran yang tepat.

Kata kunci: lagu berbahasa Inggris, pemahaman menyimak, motivasi, keterlibatan, kesulitan menyimak.

PREFACE

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for His endless blessings, grace and guidance, which have enabled me to complete this undergraduate thesis entitled *"From Melody to Meaning: Exploring Motivation, Engagement, and Difficulties in English-Song Based Listening for Intermediate EFL Learners"*. This undergraduate thesis is submitted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in the English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my advisors for their invaluable guidance, constructive suggestions, continuous encouragement, and patience throughout the process of conducting this research and completing this undergraduate thesis. Their support has been essential to the completion of this study. My sincere appreciation also goes to all lecturers of the English Education Department, the headmaster, the English teacher, and the students of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Cepu who willingly participated in this research. I am also grateful to my family, friends, and everyone who has provided support, motivation, and prayers during the completion of this undergraduate thesis.

I realize that this undergraduate thesis is still far from perfect. Therefore, I sincerely welcome constructive criticism and suggestions for its improvement. Finally, I hope that this undergraduate thesis will provide valuable contributions to the field of English language education, particularly in the area of listening instruction using English songs, and serve as a useful reference for future researchers.

Bojonegoro, 7 July 2026



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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The acquisition of listening skills constitutes a fundamental yet particularly demanding component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. For intermediate learners, this challenge intensifies as the focus shifts from basic word recognition to the complex task of comprehending rapid, authentic spoken language replete with idiomatic expressions, connected speech, and varied accents. Conventional listening instruction, often reliant on decontextualized audio scripts, can lead to student disengagement, anxiety, and perceived monotony, thereby hindering skill development (Bakar et al., 2023). This pedagogical gap underscores the need for innovative, authentic materials that can simultaneously lower affective barriers and provide meaningful linguistic input. This challenge is also reflected in previous research conducted by Rozak et al. (2019), which found that many EFL learners still experience limitations in listening fluency despite having learned English for several years. Their findings indicate that listening comprehension requires not only sufficient linguistic knowledge but also continuous exposure to meaningful listening activities and appropriate instructional strategies. Therefore, teachers need to employ engaging and authentic listening materials that can facilitate learners in processing spoken language more effectively.

In this context, English-language songs emerge as a potent and culturally resonant pedagogical tool. Music's inherent appeal lies in its ability to engage learners affectively and cognitively, creating a relaxed and motivating classroom atmosphere (Setyaningsih & Calyono, 2022). For intermediate EFL learners, songs

offer a bridge to authentic language use, exposing them to natural pronunciation, rhythm, vocabulary, and grammatical structures in a memorable context. Recent studies affirm that song-based activities can significantly enhance learner motivation and participation, transforming listening from a passive exercise into an active, enjoyable experience (Pratama & Indriani, 2023).

However, the journey from melody to meaning is not without its obstacles. The very authenticity that makes songs valuable also introduces specific difficulties. Learners may struggle with decoding lyrics due to fast tempo, vocal distortion, slang, cultural references, and non-standard grammar (Lestari, 2025; Azzahra, 2025). This creates a critical tension: a resource that is highly motivating can become a source of frustration if the linguistic challenges are not adequately mediated. While existing research frequently highlights either the motivational benefits or the linguistic hurdles of using songs, there is a lack of integrated investigation that explores how motivation, cognitive-behavioural engagement, and perceived difficulties interact within the same learning experience for intermediate learners (Muhamad et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study is situated to address this gap. It seeks to provide a holistic exploration of the dynamic interplay between the affective pull of music and the cognitive demands of listening comprehension. By examining how motivation fuels engagement, and how engagement, in turn, is tested and shaped by specific difficulties, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the song-based listening process. The findings are expected to inform the development of more effective, balanced pedagogical strategies that leverage the joy of music to foster resilient and skilled listeners.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background outlined above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the use of English songs influence the motivation and engagement of intermediate EFL learners in listening comprehension activities?
2. What specific difficulties do intermediate EFL learners encounter when comprehending listening material presented through English songs?
3. How do learners strategy to overcome these difficulties and derive meaning from song-based listening tasks?

C. Objectives of the Study

Corresponding to the research problems, the objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how the use of English songs influences the motivation and engagement of intermediate EFL learners in listening comprehension activities.
2. To identify and describe the specific difficulties faced by intermediate EFL learners when comprehending listening materials presented through English songs.
3. To explore the strategies learners employ to overcome comprehension difficulties and construct meaning during song-based listening tasks.

D. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to contemporary theories of second language acquisition by integrating affective, cognitive, and behavioural perspectives within the context of authentic listening instruction. By empirically examining the constructs of motivation and engagement (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) within the specific context of song-based listening, it seeks to advance understanding beyond general assumptions. Furthermore, by analysing learner difficulties through the lens of cognitive load theory (Sweller et al., 2019) and contemporary listening processing models (Graham, 2017; Siegel, 2018), the study aim to provide a more integrated framework that connects emotional appeal, cognitive processing, and strategic competence in the use of authentic audio materials.

2. Practical Significance

a. For EFL Teachers

The findings will offer evidence-based insights for designing more effective and engaging listening lessons. Teachers can learn how to select appropriate songs, sequence activities to pre-empt common difficulties, and create tasks that strategically harness motivation to boost comprehension and learner autonomy.

b. For EFL Learners

This study highlights the value of songs as a tool for self-directed learning. By understanding common challenges and effective coping strategies, intermediate learners can become more metacognitively aware and confident in using music to improve their listening skills outside the classroom.

c. For Curriculum Developers and Material Designers

The results can inform the creation of structured, song-based listening modules or supplementary materials that systematically address the transition from melodic appeal to linguistic understanding, ensuring pedagogical effectiveness.

d. For Future Researchers

This study identifies specific areas for further investigation, such as the long-term impact of song-based instruction on listening proficiency, the differential effects of music genres, or the development of tailored strategy training programs for song comprehension.

E. Definition of Key Terminologies

To ensure clarity and a shared understanding of the core concepts in this study, the following key terminologies are defined based on established literature in the field.

1. Intermediate EFL Learners

The term "Intermediate EFL Learners" refers to students who have progressed beyond foundational proficiency but are not yet advanced. Expert definitions provide specific benchmarks. Intermediate learners are characterized as those who can manage familiar communication situations but experience difficulty with complex spoken input (Nation & Newton, 2020). This view aligns with contemporary descriptions of intermediate proficiency (Ellis, 2015; CEFR, 2020), who describes them as learners who can perform "unscripted" conversations on predictable topics but lack the fluency and accuracy for fully spontaneous

discourse. In operational terms, these descriptions correspond to the B1 (Threshold) level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2020), which denotes an ability to understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters.

In conclusion, for this study, an intermediate EFL learner is defined as a student at the CEFR B1 level, capable of understanding straightforward audio on familiar topics but requiring strategic effort and support to process extended, authentic, and linguistically complex listening materials such as songs.

2. English-Song Based Listening

This term denotes a pedagogical approach where songs are the primary authentic text for listening instruction. Experts highlight its multifaceted value. Recent studies argue that songs facilitate repetition, phonological awareness, and implicit learning (Millington, 2018; Arjomandi & Sharififar, 2019). More recently research positions songs as authentic linguistic and cultural input (Millington, 2018). From a task-design perspective, Cakir (2015) emphasizes that effective song-based listening moves learners from passive hearing to active listening through structured tasks targeting specific linguistic features.

In conclusion, for this study, English-Song Based Listening is defined as an instructional method that utilizes commercial English-language songs as authentic audio texts, engaging learners in structured activities designed to bridge affective appeal and the active development of discrete and global listening comprehension skills.

3. Motivation

Motivation in language learning is a complex, multi-component construct. Motivation is viewed as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Al-Hoorie & Dörnyei, 2019). This highlights its role as an engine for action. For a more specific emotional dimension, (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) recent studies emphasize the role positive emotions such as enjoyment in sustaining engagement.

In conclusion, for this study, motivation is defined as the internal and external drives that initiate and sustain a learner's effort and persistence in song-based listening tasks, encompassing both the intrinsic enjoyment derived from the music and the extrinsic desire to improve listening proficiency.

4. Engagement

Engagement represents the observable manifestation of motivation in learning contexts. Engagement is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2020). In the specific context of language learning, Philp and Duchesne (2016) define engagement as "a state of heightened attention and involvement, in which participation is reflected not only in the behavioural dimension but also affectively and cognitively" (p. 51), emphasizing its simultaneous dimensions. Recent SLA research highlights engagement as sustained cognitive and affective involvement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

In conclusion, for this study, engagement is defined as a multi-dimensional state evidenced by a learner's active participation in tasks (behavioural), positive

emotional connection to the activity (affective), and dedicated mental investment in comprehending and processing the song's linguistic content (cognitive).

5. Difficulties

Difficulties refer to the specific points of breakdown in the listening comprehension process. Listening difficulties are explained through updated cognitive and metacognitive perspectives (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015; Graham, 2017). Contemporary listening models distinguish between decoding and meaning-building processes (Siegel, 2018).

In conclusion, for this study, difficulties are defined as the specific linguistic (e.g., decoding connected speech, unknown vocabulary), cognitive (e.g., processing speed, memory overload), and affective (e.g., anxiety) obstacles that intermediate learners encounter which impede their successful comprehension of English songs.