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EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' LISTENING STRATEGIES THROUGH YOUTUBE MUSIC SONGS AT SMAN 1 KEDIRI

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Abstract

EFL learning at the senior high school level continues to face various challenges, particularly in the acquisition of listening skills due to limited exposure to authentic input. In language acquisition, employing systematic listening strategies is essential as it enables learners to consciously process complex spoken input, overcome acoustic barriers, and regulate their own learning pace. To address this issue, the utilization of audio-based digital media, such as English songs on YouTube Music, has emerged as a popular and accessible autonomous learning resource among adolescents. The aims of this research are 1) to identify the types of strategies employed by students when using YouTube Music songs to develop their English listening skills; and 2) to describe how students implement those strategies when using YouTube Music songs for listening skills. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design carried out at SMAN 1 Kediri. The subjects of this research were 10 senior high school students of Class XI-D in the academic year 2025/2026 who were active users of YouTube Music songs. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires and guided interviews. Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was checked using the data triangulation method. The findings reveal that YouTube Music songs develop listening skills through four strategies: repetition, subtitles/lyrics, note-taking, and comprehension techniques. Students implement these by combining actions like replaying for translation, text cross-referencing, adjusting device placement, and mimicking pronunciation. This media successfully fosters low-anxiety, autonomous, and self-regulated learning.

Keywords: *YouTube Music, Listening Strategies, Listening Skill Development*

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INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at the senior high school level continues to face various persistent challenges, particularly in mastering listening skills. At SMAN 1 Kediri, students frequently encounter difficulties in comprehending spoken English delivered by native speakers due to limited exposure to authentic language input in their daily environments. This condition is exacerbated by the scarcity of direct interaction with native speakers as well as an over-reliance on textbook-based instructional materials, which tend to lack diversity in presenting real-world communicative contexts. Consequently, students struggle to recognize variations in intonation, accent, and speech rate. Furthermore, traditional teacher centered instructional methods often provide limited opportunities for students to develop autonomous learning strategies.

Recent trends demonstrate that adolescents are significantly more exposed to digital audio-based media, particularly songs, than to formal instructional materials. English songs available on digital streaming platforms such as YouTube Music have emerged as one of the most popular and accessible autonomous learning resources due to their ease of access and alignment with adolescent interests (Dewi, 2023; Hasan, 2025). The pedagogical utilization of songs extends beyond entertainment; songs possess substantial potential to enhance listening skills when utilized appropriately (Yuyun & Simamora, 2021). Through repeated exposure, learners gradually internalize linguistic patterns, pronunciation, and novel vocabulary items (Juita, 2024).

Despite the strong potential offered by YouTube Music, many students utilize the platform purely for leisure without employing structured learning strategies (Dewi, 2023; Rahila et al., 2023). Learning strategies play a pivotal role in determining learner success in comprehending spoken input, as they assist learners in processing information, monitoring comprehension, and overcoming listening obstacles effectively (Oxford, 1990; Vandergrift, 2007). Most prior studies have focused predominantly on media effectiveness or quantitative learning outcomes rather than qualitatively exploring the specific strategies implemented by students (Fadillah et al., 2023; Susanti, 2020).

Addressing this research gap, this study aims to: 1) Identify the types of listening strategies employed by students when utilizing English songs on YouTube Music; and 2) Describe how students implement these strategies in the process of developing their English listening skills. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and learner autonomy (Peng et al., 2021; Zimmerman, 2002). Practically, the findings serve as a guide for language educators in designing authentic digital media-based listening instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the investigated phenomenon within its natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Kediri, located on Jl. Veteran No.1, Mojoroto, Kediri, East Java, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research subjects comprised 10 eleventh-grade students from class XI-D, selected via purposive sampling. The selection criteria specified students who actively used the YouTube Music application and regularly listened to English songs in their daily routines.

Primary data were gathered through open-ended reflection questionnaires (written reflective texts) and guided interviews conducted after students listened to the authentic song "Story of My Life" by One Direction. Secondary data were retrieved from relevant scientific literature, including books, peer-reviewed journals, and supporting academic documents.

Data collection focused on written reflection sheets covering three primary domains: strategy activation, identification of acoustic/phonetic difficulties, and action plans for comprehension improvement. To ensure data trustworthiness and credibility, data triangulation (combining written reflection results, documentation, and guided interviews) was applied. Data analysis followed the Interactive Model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising three concurrent flows: 1) Data reduction, 2) Data display, and 3) Conclusion drawing and verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative analysis of the written reflections and guided interviews revealed that students do not interact with YouTube Music songs passively. Instead, they consciously employ four primary types of strategies to process auditory language input.

1. Types of Listening Strategies Applied by Students (RQ1)

Repetition Strategy: Repetition represents the most fundamental cognitive strategy applied by all participants. Students utilize the application's playback controls to replay and pause songs in order to clarify missed words caused by the fast singing pace of native performers. For instance, student SZR stated: *"Replay and pause lyrics I don't understand, then translate them"*.

Use of Subtitles and Lyrics: To match spoken phonetic sounds with their written forms, students utilize the synchronized lyrics display on the screen. Student SPA explained: *"I look at the lyric text and repeat the difficult parts until they become clearer"*.

Note-taking Vocabulary: Students leverage exposure to songs to enrich their vocabulary by jotting down unfamiliar words. Student SNA expressed: *"By taking notes on new words & studying their meanings"*.

Comprehension Techniques: Students employ mental techniques such as focusing concentration and inferring contextual meaning. Student SNM stated: *"Focus, stay quiet and listen; Guessing lyrics and meanings"*. Student SSI also combined this with pronunciation practice: *"Looking at the lyrics and pronouncing them"*.

Table 1. Summary of Student Listening Strategy Types

Strategy Type	Operational Indicator	Sample Student Response
Repetition	Replaying and pausing audio at difficult segments.	*"Pause and replay"* (SPA); *"Replay"* (SNK)
Subtitles/Lyrics	Reading synchronized lyrics while audio plays.	*"Listening while looking at lyrics"* (SSN)
Note-taking	Jotting down unfamiliar words/phrases to look up meanings.	*"By taking notes on new words & studying their meanings"* (SNA)
Comprehension	Inferring meaning from context and mimicking pronunciation.	*"Guessing lyrics and meanings; Focus..."* (SNM)

2. Strategy Implementation in Using YouTube Music (RQ2)

Students rarely implement strategies in isolation; instead, they dynamically combine multiple actions:

Operationalization of Repetition and Translation: Students pause songs during fast-paced passages, then open digital dictionaries or translation tools to interpret difficult phrases.

Physical and Acoustic Adaptation: Physical behavioral adjustments were observed to maximize audio clarity, as noted by student SZA: "Bringing the volume source closer to my ear so the lyrics can be heard more clearly".

Integration of Speaking and Oral Practice: Receptive audio input is transformed into productive oral output. Student SSN shared: "Listening again, then pausing and pronouncing it slowly".

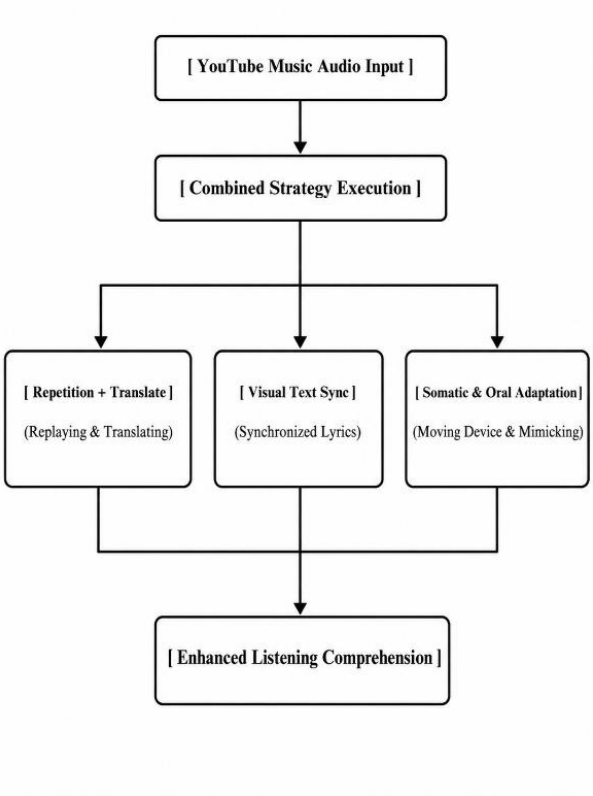


Figure 1. Flowchart of Student Combined Strategy Implementation

DISCUSSION

Based on empirical findings, the deployment of these four listening strategy types reinforces the language learning strategy theories formulated by (Oxford, 1990; Vandergrift, 2003). Students' success in controlling song playback speed through platform features supports the findings of (Peng et al., 2021) within Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) frameworks, which suggest that full control over digital media mitigates learner cognitive load.

The use of synchronized lyrics facilitates bimodal processing, enabling students to simultaneously verify spoken phonetic sounds with visual text. This aligns with (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) perspective on metacognitive strategies. Additionally, students' habits of note-taking new vocabulary corroborate (Nation, 2001) theory of incidental vocabulary learning turning into active learning.

In terms of implementation, students' ability to combine replaying, translating, physical adjustments, and pronunciation mimicry reflects a high degree of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002). These findings further confirm the conclusions of (Maulana & Salsabil, 2026) regarding cognitive engagement in digital environments. Interestingly, utilizing a personal mobile device environment significantly reduces the fear of making mistakes commonly present in formal classrooms, as identified by (Susanti, 2020). Leveraging YouTube Music successfully fosters a low-anxiety autonomous learning ecosystem.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the qualitative data analysis, it can be concluded that Class XI-D students at SMAN 1 Kediri actively employ four primary listening strategies when engaging with songs on YouTube Music, encompassing repetition, subtitle or lyric usage, vocabulary note-taking, and contextual comprehension techniques. Students implement these strategies in an integrated manner by combining technical application controls, physical device positioning, digital translation tools, and independent pronunciation practice, thereby establishing YouTube Music as a flexible and potent platform for autonomous, low-anxiety language acquisition.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges several constraints, including its exclusive focus on song-based audio media, a restricted sample size of ten students within a single classroom, and the absence of quantitative or longitudinal measurements regarding listening achievement scores. To optimize these insights, English language educators are encouraged to incorporate authentic digital audio media into classroom instruction while explicitly scaffolding metacognitive listening strategies, whereas educational institutions should establish supportive policies that promote the constructive use of mobile devices to advance Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

Furthermore, future researchers are strongly advised to expand the participant demographic, employ mixed-methods research designs, or evaluate the pedagogical efficacy of these strategies across alternative digital audio modalities, such as educational podcasts.

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