



Improving English Vocabulary of the Fifth Grade Students at Santa Monica Elementary School Through YouTube English Songs

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 13 Jan 2025	This study examines the use of YouTube English Songs as a digital learning resource to enhance English vocabulary among fifth-grade students at Santa Monica Elementary School. Vocabulary mastery is a crucial component in English language learning, as it directly affects students' ability to communicate and comprehend meaning. However, many students demonstrated limited vocabulary due to low engagement and passive participation during learning activities. This study aims to implement and evaluate YouTube English Songs as an instructional tool to improve students' vocabulary. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design with a qualitative approach was employed, involving 20 fifth-grade students across two cycles, each comprising the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through observation and pre-test and post-test instruments. The findings revealed that the use of YouTube English Songs significantly increased students' engagement and motivation. Collaborative singing activities led to a substantial improvement in vocabulary knowledge, with average scores rising from 66.45 in the pre-test to 74.45 after Cycle 1, and further to 90.4 after Cycle 2. Challenges encountered included time management and the selection of songs aligned with learning themes. These findings indicate that learning vocabulary through English songs is an effective and enjoyable strategy that offers a dynamic alternative to conventional teaching methods. Educators are encouraged to integrate digital learning resources into their instructional practices, and further research is recommended to explore this approach across different educational contexts.
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1. Introduction

English is an international language used in numerous countries worldwide. Proficiency in English can open many opportunities for students in the future, including expanding career prospects, enabling study abroad, and broadening their knowledge of the world (Leona et al., 2021). Language serves the purpose of communication—to convey ideas, opinions, and information to others. Successful communication requires the ability to draw upon a rich repertoire of language knowledge. English has become the most significant language of communication in today's era of globalization (Abdala, 2024; Munthe et al., 2022). By learning English, students can more readily access information from various sources, including books, films, music, and the internet. Therefore, developing English skills is essential to students' academic and personal growth.

Learning the four English language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is fundamental. Listening and speaking are associated with spoken language, while reading and writing are associated with written language. These four competencies are closely linked to the cognitive processes that underlie language use. Among the linguistic features of English, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation play central roles. Strong vocabulary knowledge is particularly critical for effective reading and listening comprehension. Estimates vary regarding the ideal vocabulary size for learners, but the consensus is clear: the more vocabulary a student possesses, the more proficient they will become in English (Aura et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2019; Saha, 2023; Zwier & Boers, 2022). Therefore, improving vocabulary and language structure is a prerequisite for developing overall English proficiency (Munibi, 2023).

Vocabulary is an essential component integrated into all four English language skills. A solid vocabulary foundation is needed to comprehend and produce English across various contexts. Vocabulary encompasses all the words in a language and the meanings they convey, representing the wealth of words available to a speaker or writer (Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Milatia, 2022). Without adequate vocabulary, learners face significant barriers in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Vocabulary is the primary foundation of language understanding and use; without it, a person will struggle to express ideas, comprehend texts, and interact effectively in English. Therefore, vocabulary instruction must be prioritized to support students' English language development.

Acquiring vocabulary knowledge enhances students' overall language ability (Lewis, 2014). The larger the repertoire of words a learner knows in a given language, the more effectively they can engage with that language. Vocabulary can be understood as all the words known and used by individuals within a specific language system. Furthermore, Milatia (2022) asserts that vocabulary is the primary foundation for communication in any language, and that the confidence to speak must be supported by sufficient vocabulary knowledge. She further suggests that vocabulary learning can be enriched through meaningful encounters with everyday surroundings—the home environment, local community, and frequently visited places such as markets, shops, public transportation hubs, hotels, and stations.

In the context of global technological advancement, the role of English extends beyond business and academic collaboration. English plays a central role in accessing technological information (Basöz, 2016; Datu, 2024; Jiang & Vásquez, 2025). The ability to actively participate in discussions and share knowledge in English opens doors to exchanging ideas with specialists from across the globe, making English proficiency indispensable in the digital age (Apridayani & Waluyo, 2025; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024).

Several challenges have been identified among fifth-grade students at Santa Monica Elementary School in their English learning. Students are not yet proficient in pronouncing English vocabulary correctly and accurately, and their English vocabulary remains limited. During English lessons, learners tend to be passive, receiving material without demonstrating enthusiastic responses or active participation. When vocabulary-related content is introduced, students show limited engagement and motivation.

Considering these challenges, techniques that can enhance students' motivation to learn and memorize vocabulary are essential. The use of English songs is one such approach, as it enables educators to develop students' vocabulary skills in an enjoyable and memorable way. Songs naturally repeat words and phrases, stimulating students' memory in an organic manner. Zahari and Ananda (2024) confirm that song-based learning media helps elementary school students learn English effectively, allowing them to play and learn simultaneously. Rather than presenting students with lists of isolated vocabulary items, introducing an English song to be sung, analyzed, and understood integrates vocabulary learning with listening skill development. As Coxhead (2017) asserts, the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and functional language use is very strong, and students must know the vocabulary of their learning domain well in order to develop language proficiency.

The use of songs to teach vocabulary serves the primary purpose of making it easier for students to understand and retain new words, while simultaneously enhancing the enjoyment of the learning process and reducing monotony. Songs create a more engaging and effective learning atmosphere by combining music with language, facilitating comprehension and retention. They expose students to language in varied contexts and themes, thereby expanding their lexical range (Hidayatullah, 2019). Moreover, songs support the development of speaking and listening abilities as students learn language within the context of complete, meaningful sentences.

Research by Simatupang et al. (2023) demonstrates that vocabulary acquisition through English songs enables students to expand their vocabulary through an engaging and interactive method. Students are encouraged to participate actively through singing activities aligned with the learning theme. In addition to singing, students are introduced to movements that support comprehension of the song's meaning, thereby reinforcing memory and active involvement (see also Indriyani & Wakerkwa, 2024). This song-based approach creates a distinct learning atmosphere compared to conventional methods, allowing students to more easily remember new words and gain confidence in using them. With consistent application and development, this method has strong potential for broader

implementation across elementary schools, making English learning a more innovative and effective experience (see also Tram et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

Mastery vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of English learning, especially for young learners, as vocabulary forms the foundation for developing other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. In this context, the use of digital media such as YouTube has become an effective learning alternative due to its ability to provide authentic, contextual, and multimodal language input. A systematic literature review study showed that YouTube provides a combination of visual, audio, and contextual elements that can significantly improve students' vocabulary recognition, retention, and recall (Abdala, 2024; Tohamba, 2025). Furthermore, the use of YouTube-based videos also provides a more engaging and interactive learning experience than conventional methods, thus supporting active student engagement in the learning process (Alghuwainem, 2025; Widiantari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, English songs presented on the YouTube platform have been shown to significantly contribute to improving elementary school students' vocabulary mastery. Children's songs generally have characteristics of repetition, rhythm, and simple structures that make it easier for students to remember and understand new words. Research shows that repetitive song lyrics enable students to imitate, understand, and internalize vocabulary more effectively (Fitriani, 2023). In addition, the use of songs in learning can also increase learning motivation and create a pleasant learning atmosphere, which ultimately has an impact on improving students' vocabulary learning outcomes (Putri & Rustipa, 2023).

The use of YouTube as a medium for vocabulary learning has also received a positive response from students. Empirical research shows that most students have a positive perception of the use of YouTube in English learning because it is considered engaging, easily accessible, and helpful in vocabulary comprehension (Hidayati & Syafryadin, 2023). Furthermore, another study revealed that using YouTube videos in vocabulary learning can increase student engagement and the effectiveness of the learning process, despite challenges such as selecting appropriate content and limited internet access (Kulsum et al., 2023). However, although YouTube and English songs have great potential for vocabulary learning, there are several challenges that require attention. Unsupervised use of YouTube can lead to distraction and exposure to inappropriate content for children, necessitating the role of teachers in scaffolding and selecting appropriate materials (Tohamba, 2025).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of using songs and videos is also influenced by internal and external factors of the student, such as age, motivation, and learning environment (Andari & Wiguna, 2022; Apridayani & Waluyo, 2025; Babari et al., 2023). Therefore, research that integrates YouTube English songs in vocabulary learning, especially for elementary school students, is important to explore the most effective strategies in optimally improving vocabulary mastery.

3. Research Method

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design involving two cycles (Yin, 2016). Each cycle comprised multiple stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted at Santa Monica Elementary School with 20 fifth-grade students as participants. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests administered before and after each cycle to assess changes in students' vocabulary knowledge. Classroom observations were also conducted to monitor student involvement, participation, and the overall learning atmosphere during singing activities.

The researcher conducted several stages as part of the data analysis procedure. First, data were compiled from two sources: classroom observation and test results. The researcher then identified and selected the relevant data for analysis. To compare student learning outcomes across Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, a quantitative analysis was performed by calculating the average scores from pre-test and post-test assessments. The results were then evaluated to determine the significance and implications of the findings. Finally, data were presented in tables and diagrams to facilitate clear and accessible interpretations.

4. Results and Discussions

The integration of YouTube-based English songs as a medium for vocabulary instruction, particularly within the thematic context of transportation-related vocabulary, demonstrated pedagogical effectiveness in enhancing fifth-grade students' vocabulary acquisition during Cycle 1. The activity captured students' attention and significantly increased their participation. Furthermore, the average vocabulary test score rose from 66.45 to 74.45, indicating that learning through YouTube English Songs helped students enrich their vocabulary and improve their descriptive skills.

During Cycle 1, instruction was conducted over two learning hours on Monday, April 28, 2025, from 07.35 to 08.10 WIB. The instructional procedure involved a group singing activity using a transportation-themed English song, followed by a collaborative translation exercise to explore the song's meaning. Students subsequently completed an individual written assessment, and data were collected from the resulting student worksheets. Although student engagement showed significant improvement, the cycle analysis also revealed that a number of students still faced difficulties with the written test and required teacher assistance.

The Table 1 below presents a comparative analysis of the pre-test scores, post-test scores from Cycle 1, and post-test scores from Cycle 2.

Table 1. Student Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

No.	Student's Name	Pre-test Score	Post-test Cycle 1	Post-test Cycle 2
1.	AQ	69	73	87
2.	AD	64	68	93
3.	AG	71	87	96
4.	AV	70	79	96
5.	BL	67	80	97

6.	CH	60	65	87
7.	CY	70	80	98
8.	CL	60	68	85
9.	DN	70	81	91
10.	DY	60	67	90
11.	GC	77	86	93
12.	KY	78	83	95
13.	LL	70	79	97
14.	LI	68	78	96
15.	NC	62	68	94
16.	PC	65	75	90
17.	QV	60	73	89
18.	SV	55	60	69
19.	TM	68	69	85
20.	WL	65	70	80
	Average Score	66.45	74.45	90.4

In Cycle 2, modifications were implemented based on reflections from Cycle 1, addressing several identified shortcomings. Song lyrics were prepared in advance to assist students during assessments and to make more effective use of instructional time. Activities in Cycle 2 were conducted on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, from 07.35 to 08.10 WIB. Reflections on Cycle 2 showed a further increase in participation, reflecting heightened motivation and engagement among students. Vocabulary test scores rose from an average of 74.45 to 90.4, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach in improving students' vocabulary. These findings imply that the integration of YouTube English Songs is not only effective as an instructional medium but also functions as a pedagogical strategy that promotes active learning, multimodal engagement, and contextual vocabulary acquisition (see Sulis & Mercer, 2026). The use of songs supports auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles simultaneously, thereby addressing diverse learner needs in the classroom. Furthermore, this approach reinforces the importance of integrating technology-based media in elementary language instruction to align with students' digital literacy and learning preferences in the modern educational context.

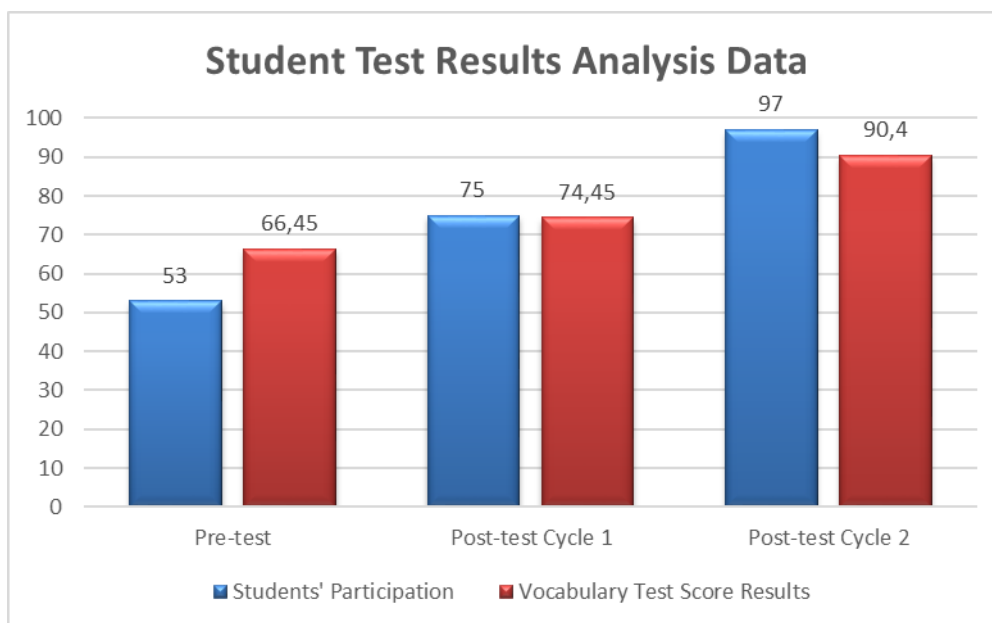


Figure 1. Student Test Result

Research indicates that children under 11–12 years of age demonstrate greater potential for acquiring a foreign language due to the increased neurological flexibility of the developing brain. Children tend to be more fluent in acquiring new languages and can approximate native-like pronunciation more readily than adults. Their capacity to absorb new phonetic and grammatical structures is less constrained by interference from their mother tongue. As a result, English instruction for children cannot be designed the same way as instruction for adults. Teachers must be knowledgeable about child-appropriate pedagogical approaches. Wulanjani (2016) explains, teachers must create facilitative conditions for vocabulary learning by teaching useful words and helping children understand their meaning in contextually meaningful ways. Using songs to teach vocabulary to elementary school students is both an enjoyable and effective method—songs help children retain new words through engaging rhythms and melodies, enabling faster and more sustainable learning.

Contemporary teaching can be enriched through the use of digital devices and applications. As technology has advanced, a wide range of applications have been developed to facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences (Hamilton et al., 2024; Hidayatullah, 2019). In the current digital era, application-based learning media are readily accessible. As members of the millennial generation navigating the industry 4.0 landscape, students are capable of understanding and utilizing application-based technology to support their learning. Vitaloka (2024) notes, educational technology is essential to improving learning quality and preparing future generations to face complex global challenges. The development and utilization of instructional technology have significantly transformed how we teach and learn, enabling more interactive, inclusive, and adaptive learning environments. Innovations such as online learning platforms, mobile applications, and adaptive learning software have created new opportunities to

enrich students' learning experiences. Platforms such as "kelas.com" and "Ruangguru," as well as various Learning Management Systems (LMS), exemplify the growing range of digital tools available to educators.

Sinaga and Tarigan (2024) explored the application of English songs as a pedagogical tool to support vocabulary development among third-grade students at Markus Middle School, Medan. The study involved a single class of 26 students and was conducted through a CAR framework across two iterative cycles. Quantitative data were collected via pre-test and post-test instruments to assess the impact of the intervention. Results demonstrated a notable enhancement in vocabulary mastery, reflected in the progression of average scores from 40.76% in Cycle 1 to 60.76% in Cycle 2—a 20% gain. The findings underscore the effectiveness of integrating music into language instruction, particularly in reinforcing listening comprehension and lexical acquisition, and highlight the broader pedagogical potential of this approach for advancing English language proficiency.

Writing vocabulary is often one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, requiring educators to demonstrate creativity in designing strategies that accelerate vocabulary acquisition. Effective approaches include the association method, in which learners link new vocabulary to visual images, narratives, or emotional experiences to enhance memorization and retention. Structured learning strategies—such as maintaining vocabulary notebooks and using technology such as digital applications and vocabulary learning websites—can also significantly support vocabulary development (Britto, 2023). When teachers design effective learning strategies that integrate these methods, student learning outcomes improve meaningfully. However, despite the positive findings, this study also presents several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a relatively small sample size consisting of only one class, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, the study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design without a control group, making it difficult to isolate the specific effect of YouTube English Songs compared to other instructional methods. Third, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, which restricts the ability to assess the long-term retention of vocabulary acquired through this approach. Fourth, external factors such as students' prior vocabulary knowledge, individual learning differences, and varying levels of exposure to English outside the classroom were not fully controlled.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research substantiate that the integration of YouTube English Songs as a vocabulary teaching approach for fifth-grade students at Santa Monica Elementary School effectively enhances lexical acquisition. The use of English songs in vocabulary instruction facilitated a marked improvement in students' vocabulary, as evidenced by a significant rise in average test scores—from 66.45 in the pre-test to 74.45 after Cycle 1, representing a 13% increase, and further to 90.4 after Cycle 2, indicating an additional 24% improvement. One limitation of this approach concerns the availability

of an internet connection; however, this can be addressed by teachers downloading the required songs in advance and preparing the material prior to the lesson.

This activity also encouraged higher student engagement and provided opportunities for students to practice their pronunciation creatively. It is imperative for educators to carefully curate song selections that are thematically relevant and appropriately differentiated to address the diverse proficiency levels within the classroom, thereby facilitating inclusive and meaningful participation. This careful alignment is crucial to ensuring that YouTube English Songs, as digital learning resources, are effectively matched to the contextual demands of the learning environment. In addition, students' self-confidence and motivation to learn should be continuously fostered.

The implications of this study extend to pedagogical practice, curriculum design, and educational policy. For teachers, the findings suggest that integrating music-based digital media such as YouTube can serve as an effective strategy to enhance vocabulary instruction and student engagement. For curriculum developers, this approach highlights the need to incorporate technology-integrated and student-centered learning models into language teaching frameworks. For educational institutions, the study underscores the importance of supporting digital infrastructure and providing professional development for teachers to effectively implement technology-enhanced learning strategies.

The recommendation for students is that they should be more confident in pronouncing English vocabulary, even if minor mistakes occasionally occur. Active and confident engagement with learning activities will optimize the absorption of instructional material and support growth in English vocabulary. For schools, the provision of a stable internet network is strongly recommended, as digital learning resources are closely dependent on internet access, and its absence can significantly disrupt learning activities. For future researchers, regular monitoring and evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of YouTube English Songs as an instructional method is recommended. Ongoing assessment will help ensure that the approach remains effective and relevant to students' vocabulary development over time.

Future research is strongly recommended to employ more rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental designs, involve larger and more diverse samples, and examine long-term learning outcomes to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of YouTube English Songs in vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, further studies may explore the integration of this approach with other instructional strategies, such as task-based learning or gamification, to maximize its pedagogical impact.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Authors' contribution

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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