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The Effect of Using One Direction's Songs on the Listening Comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Students' difficulties in understanding spoken English remain a challenge in English language learning, particularly when listening activities do not sufficiently engage learners or support their comprehension of spoken texts. Therefore, alternative instructional media are needed to make listening activities more engaging and meaningful. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using One Direction songs to improve the listening comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design. The participants consisted of 30 students selected through total sampling. Data were collected through listening comprehension tests administered before and after the instructional treatment, which incorporated two One Direction songs, namely "Story of My Life" and "Where We Are." The data were analyzed descriptively by comparing students' mean scores and achievement of the minimum passing criterion (KKM) of 75. The findings showed that the students' mean score increased from 62.00 on the pre-test to 88.16 on the post-test, representing a gain of 26.16 points. Moreover, the number of students who achieved the KKM increased from 3 students (10%) to 22 students (73.3%). These findings suggest that using English songs may be a useful instructional strategy for supporting students' listening comprehension. However, because the study did not include a control group, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Further research using a controlled design is recommended to provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of song-based listening instruction.

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1. Introduction

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning because it enables learners to understand spoken information, recognize vocabulary, and interpret meaning in communicative contexts. Listening is not merely a passive process of hearing sounds but involves the interaction of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and contextual interpretation (Field, 2009; Rost, 2020). Yuliana (2022) emphasizes the importance of listening as a source of language input through which learners encounter vocabulary and grammatical structures. However, EFL learners often experience difficulties understanding spoken English because of limited vocabulary, unfamiliar pronunciation, connected speech, and variations in speaking rate. These challenges indicate the need for appropriate instructional strategies and engaging learning media to support listening development.

Learning motivation and instructional materials also influence students' engagement in language learning. Dörnyei et al. (2014) highlights the importance of motivation in sustaining learners' participation and effort. Harmer (2015) similarly emphasizes the role of appropriate teaching materials and activities in facilitating language development. In this context, English songs offer an alternative medium for listening instruction because they combine linguistic input with rhythm, melody, repetition, and emotional expression. Songs can expose learners to vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and sentence patterns while creating a more enjoyable learning environment (Millington, 2011). Their potential benefits also relate to repeated auditory exposure, which may help learners recognize spoken words and expressions more effectively.

Previous studies have investigated the use of English songs in listening instruction. Almutairi and Shukri (2016) examined songs as a tool for teaching listening comprehension, while Putri (2018) reported improvements in students' listening skills through song-based instruction. Rahayu and Rifansyah (2022) and Yuliana et al. (2022) also investigated the effectiveness of English songs in improving listening comprehension. Girsang et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of English songs for listening development, while Souhuwat and Sengkey (2023) explored students' perceptions of how songs support listening skills. More recent studies by Amelia et al. (2024) and Khoirunnisa et al. (2024) investigated the use of English songs in listening comprehension among junior high school and university students, respectively. Marbun et al. (2025), Siahaan et al. (2025), and Zakly et al. (2025) further examined song-based listening instruction, students' listening development, and the use of songs for out-of-class listening activities. Larasati and Hanafi (2025) investigated the relationship between students' habits of listening to English songs and their listening comprehension. Collectively, these studies demonstrate continuing interest in songs as a resource for language learning, although their findings must be interpreted in relation to their research designs, participants, and instructional contexts.

Despite these investigations, further context-specific research is needed to examine the use of particular popular songs in junior high school listening instruction. One Direction songs provide potential instructional materials because their lyrics can be used

in activities involving word recognition, vocabulary identification, and comprehension of spoken English. However, the suitability of songs depends on their linguistic characteristics and the learning objectives rather than popularity alone. When accompanied by structured listening exercises, vocabulary preparation, repetition, and discussion, songs may provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop their listening comprehension.

The present study emerged from preliminary observations of Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School during the 2025/2026 academic year. Students reportedly experienced difficulties understanding spoken English because of limited vocabulary, unfamiliar pronunciation, and insufficient exposure to varied listening materials. Listening activities were also considered less engaging, potentially affecting students' participation and motivation. These conditions indicate the need to investigate an alternative instructional medium that combines listening practice with materials that may be more appealing to students.

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of using One Direction songs, specifically Story of My Life and Where We Are, on the listening comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School. Specifically, this study aims to describe and compare students' listening-comprehension performance before and after the instructional intervention using these songs. It also aims to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores. Through a one-group pretest–posttest design, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of popular English songs as an alternative medium for improving listening comprehension among junior high school students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is a receptive language skill involving the recognition, processing, and interpretation of spoken information. It requires learners to identify sounds, recognize vocabulary, understand grammatical structures, and construct meaning from oral input (Field, 2009; Rost, 2020). Vandergrift and Goh (2012) explain that listening comprehension involves both bottom-up processing, which focuses on recognizing linguistic forms, and top-down processing, which uses contextual knowledge to interpret meaning. Yuliana (2022) also emphasizes the importance of listening as a source of language input for vocabulary and grammatical development. Therefore, effective listening instruction should provide opportunities for learners to recognize spoken words and understand information in context.

2.2 Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is influenced by linguistic, cognitive, affective, and instructional factors. Limited vocabulary, unfamiliar pronunciation, connected speech, and insufficient exposure to spoken English can hinder comprehension (Field, 2009; Rost, 2020). Motivation and interest are also important because they influence learners'

engagement and persistence in language learning (Dörnyei et al., 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In addition, appropriate teaching materials and instructional strategies can facilitate learning by providing meaningful opportunities for practice (Harmer, 2015; Goh, 2018). Consequently, selecting engaging and linguistically appropriate materials is important for supporting students' listening development.

2.3 Songs as a Medium for Teaching Listening

English songs are commonly used as supplementary instructional materials because they combine language input with melody, rhythm, repetition, and emotional expression. Murphey (1992) and Millington (2011) explain that songs can support language learning by providing opportunities to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, and recurring linguistic patterns. Repeated listening may help learners recognize spoken words and become more familiar with English pronunciation and intonation. However, the effectiveness of songs depends on their linguistic complexity, suitability for learners' proficiency levels, and integration into structured learning activities.

Previous studies have investigated the relationship between English songs and language-learning outcomes. Almutairi and Shukri (2016) dan Putri (2018) examined songs as a means of improving listening skills. Rahayu and Rifansyah (2022), Yuliana et al. (2022), and Girsang et al. (2023) also investigated the effectiveness of English songs in listening instruction. Souhuwat and Sengkey (2023) explored students' perceptions of using songs to improve listening skills. More recent studies by Amelia et al. (2024) and Khoirunnisa et al. (2024) examined the use of English songs among junior high school and university students, respectively. Marbun et al. (2025) and Siahaan et al. (2025) investigated song-based listening instruction, while Larasati and Hanafi (2025) examined the relationship between listening habits and listening comprehension. Zakly et al. (2025) explored learners' perceptions of using English songs for out-of-class listening activities.

Odo (2022) also reported positive effects of English songs on second-language vocabulary learning in a quantitative meta-analytic review, although vocabulary acquisition is distinct from listening comprehension. Similarly, Hamilton et al. (2024), in a systematic review of song-based language-learning interventions, identified generally positive outcomes but noted methodological limitations that restricted firm causal conclusions. These findings indicate the potential value of songs while highlighting the importance of examining their effects within specific instructional contexts.

In the present study, Story of My Life and Where We Are, performed by One Direction, were used as listening materials for Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School. The songs were incorporated into structured activities involving vocabulary preparation, listening practice, fill-in-the-blank exercises, repetition, and discussion. Building on previous research, this study examines changes in students' listening-comprehension scores before and after the intervention. Its contribution lies in investigating the use of two specific popular songs within a particular junior high school context.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The design involved administering a pre-test (O_1), providing treatment (X) using One Direction songs, and administering a post-test (O_2) to measure changes in students' listening comprehension. The research design is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. One-Group Pretest-Posttest Research Design

Pre-test (O_1)	**Treatment (X)**	**Post-test (O_2)**
Measures initial listening comprehension	Teaching using One Direction songs	Measures comprehension after treatment

The population consisted of eighth-grade students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School in the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample comprised 30 students from eighth-grade students, selected through total sampling. Data were collected using fill-in-the-blank listening comprehension tests based on two One Direction songs: "Story of My Life" and "Where We Are." The treatment was conducted over three to four sessions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test at a significance level of 0.05.

4. Results

This study investigated the improvement in listening comprehension among Eighth-Grade Students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School during the 2025/2026 academic year following the implementation of One Direction songs as instructional media. The data were obtained from pre-test and post-test assessments administered to 30 students. The results are presented in three sections: pre-test results, post-test results, and a comparison of students' achievement before and after the instructional treatment.

4.1 Pre-test Results

The pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial listening comprehension abilities before the implementation of the instructional treatment using One Direction songs. The assessment employed a fill-in-the-blank format to measure students' ability to recognize, identify, and understand English words presented through spoken audio. This assessment also provided baseline data for evaluating changes in students' listening comprehension following the instructional intervention.

The results showed that the students' mean pre-test score was 62.00. Of the 30 students who participated in the assessment, only three (10%) achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion *(Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal or KKM)* of 75, while the remaining 27 students (90%) scored below the required criterion. These findings indicate that most students had not achieved the expected level of listening comprehension before the instructional treatment. The results suggest that students needed additional instructional

support and appropriate learning media to improve their ability to understand spoken English.

Table 2. Students who Achieved Mastery in the Pre-test

No	Name	Score	Category
1	Student 13	75	Achieved
2	Student 16	85	Achieved
3	Student 23	75	Achieved

Source: Primary data (2026)

As presented in Table 2, Student 16 obtained the highest score among the students who achieved mastery, with a score of 85. Students 13 and 23 each obtained a score of 75, meeting the minimum passing criterion. Overall, only 10% of the students achieved mastery, whereas 90% remained below the required standard. This distribution demonstrates that listening comprehension was a learning challenge for most students before the implementation of the instructional intervention.

4.2 Post-test Results

The post-test was administered after the students received instruction using One Direction songs. The results showed that 22 students (73.3%) achieved the minimum passing criterion (KKM) of 75, while 8 students (26.7%) did not achieve it. The distribution of post-test scores among the students who achieved the KKM is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students who Achieved Mastery in the Post-test

No	Name	Score	Category
1	Student 1	80	Achieved
2	Student 2	85	Achieved
3	Student 3	78	Achieved
4	Student 4	75	Achieved
5	Student 5	85	Achieved
6	Student 6	75	Achieved
7	Student 7	79	Achieved
8	Student 8	75	Achieved
9	Student 9	75	Achieved
10	Student 10	76	Achieved
11	Student 11	78	Achieved
12	Student 13	85	Achieved
13	Student 15	80	Achieved
14	Student 16	95	Achieved
15	Student 18	75	Achieved
16	Student 20	85	Achieved
17	Student 22	78	Achieved

18	Student 23	85	Achieved
19	Student 24	80	Achieved
20	Student 25	80	Achieved
21	Student 26	85	Achieved
22	Student 29	75	Achieved

Source: Primary data (2026)

As shown in Table 3, 22 students achieved the minimum passing criterion (KKM) of 75, with scores ranging from 75 to 95. Most students obtained scores between 80 and 85, indicating that a considerable proportion of the participants demonstrated satisfactory listening comprehension performance after the treatment. The highest score was 95, while the lowest score among students achieving mastery was 75.

These results suggest that students demonstrated improved performance in completing listening comprehension tasks after participating in instructional activities using One Direction songs. Repeated listening, vocabulary recognition, and listening exercises may have helped students identify spoken words and understand the content of the songs. However, the eight students who did not achieve the KKM indicate that some learners continued to experience difficulties and required further instructional support.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis compared students' listening comprehension scores before and after the treatment using One Direction songs. The comparison includes the mean scores and the number of students who achieved the minimum passing criterion (KKM) of 75. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pre-test and Post-test Descriptive Statistics

Statistics	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	62.00	88.16
Students Achieving KKM	3 (10%)	22 (73.3%)
Students Not Achieving KKM	27 (90%)	8 (26.7%)

Source: Primary data analysis (2026)

As presented in Table 4, students' mean listening comprehension score increased from 62.00 in the pre-test to 88.16 in the post-test, indicating a gain of 26.16 points. This improvement suggests that students performed better after receiving listening instruction through One Direction songs. These findings are consistent with Almutairi and Shukri (2016) and Girsang et al. (2023), who reported positive contributions of English songs to students' listening comprehension.

The improvement is also reflected in the students' achievement of the KKM. Before the treatment, only 3 students (10%) achieved the minimum passing criterion, whereas 27 students (90%) remained below the required score. Following the treatment, the number of students achieving the KKM increased to 22 (73.3%), while the number of students who did not achieve it decreased to 8 (26.7%). Thus, the proportion of students

achieving mastery increased by 63.3 percentage points. This change indicates a considerable improvement in students' learning outcomes following the implementation of song-based listening activities.

These findings can also be interpreted in relation to Rost (2020), who emphasizes the importance of meaningful and engaging input in the development of listening comprehension. In this study, the use of "Story of My Life" and "Where We Are" provided students with English-language listening materials through familiar musical media. The songs offered opportunities to recognize vocabulary, follow spoken language, and become more familiar with pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. Their use may also have contributed to a more engaging learning environment and encouraged students to participate in listening activities.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate an improvement in students' listening comprehension scores and KKM achievement after the treatment. However, because this study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, the improvement cannot be attributed exclusively to the use of One Direction songs.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that the use of One Direction songs was associated with improved listening comprehension among eighth-grade students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School. The mean score increased by 26.16 points, while the proportion of students achieving the KKM rose from 10% to 73.3%. This improvement suggests that songs may serve as an alternative medium for making listening activities more engaging and supporting students who experience difficulties understanding spoken English.

The improvement may be explained by the opportunity songs provide for learners to recognize English sounds through rhythm, melody, and repeated listening. In this study, activities involving Story of My Life and Where We Are, supported by worksheets, repetition, and discussion, allowed students to connect spoken forms with written words. This interpretation is consistent with Harmer (2015), who highlights the value of authentic listening materials, and Rost (2020), who views listening comprehension as an active process of meaning construction.

Songs may also contribute to a more engaging learning environment. Millington (2011) emphasizes the connection between songs, learners' feelings, and personal experiences, while Dörnyei et al. (2014) highlights the role of motivation in language learning. These perspectives support the potential pedagogical value of songs, although student motivation and engagement were not directly measured in this study.

The results are also consistent with previous studies. Almutairi and Shukri (2016) reported positive outcomes from using songs to teach listening comprehension, Putri (2018) found improvements in students' listening achievement through English songs, and Girsang et al. (2023) examined their effectiveness in listening instruction. Nevertheless, differences in research contexts, participants, and assessment procedures should be considered when comparing these findings.

Despite the overall improvement, eight students (26.7%) did not achieve the KKM in the post-test. This indicates that song-based instruction may not address all learners' difficulties. Differences in vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation recognition, and previous learning experiences may require additional support through explicit vocabulary instruction, structured listening tasks, repeated audio exposure, and corrective feedback.

The findings should also be interpreted in light of the research design. Although the one-group pre-test–post-test design enabled comparison of students' performance before and after treatment, the absence of a control group means that the improvement cannot be attributed exclusively to the use of One Direction songs. Furthermore, the paired-samples t-test statistic and significance value, as well as the KR-20 reliability coefficient, should be reported to support the statistical interpretation and measurement reliability of the findings.

Overall, the results suggest that One Direction songs can be a useful alternative medium for teaching listening comprehension. However, further research involving control groups, complete statistical reporting, and direct measures of student engagement is needed to establish more conclusive evidence regarding the contribution of song-based instruction to listening comprehension.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of One Direction songs improved the listening comprehension of eighth-grade students at Kot'olin Public Junior High School during the 2025/2026 academic year. The students' mean score increased from 62.00 on the pre-test to 88.16 on the post-test, representing a gain of 26.16 points. Furthermore, the number of students achieving the minimum passing criterion of 75 increased from 3 students (10%) to 22 students (73.3%). These findings indicate that incorporating English songs into listening activities can be a useful instructional strategy for supporting students' listening comprehension. In particular, the songs provided students with opportunities to engage with authentic English pronunciation, vocabulary, and spoken expressions in an enjoyable learning environment. The improvement in students' scores also suggests that music-based activities can help create a more engaging atmosphere and encourage active participation in listening lessons. However, because this study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Further research involving a control group and a larger sample is recommended to provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of songs in English listening instruction.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Mardi N. Novriana: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft.

Yenssy Mervilen Fanggidae: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing.
Yanrini Martha Anabokay: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing.

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