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The effectiveness of using spotify to improve students' listening skills at SMP Panca Budi Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of using Spotify to improve students' listening skills, specifically through listening to English songs to identify missing words and analyze grammatical structures in the lyrics. A quantitative method with a pre-experimental design was applied, utilizing a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The participants consisted of 25 ninth-grade students from class IX-2 at SMP Panca Budi Medan. Data were collected through listening tests conducted before and after the treatment. The pre-test results showed a total score of 1090 with an average of 43.6, indicating low listening proficiency. After the treatment using Spotify, the post-test results increased significantly to a total score of 2140, with an average of 85.6. Statistical analysis revealed that the significance value (Sig.) was less than 0.05, confirming that the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected. These results indicate that the use of Spotify was effective in enhancing students' listening skills. The findings suggest that integrating digital music platforms like Spotify into English language instruction can provide students with engaging and authentic listening experiences. This approach not only increases students' motivation and enjoyment but also supports their comprehension of real-life language use. Therefore, educators are encouraged to utilize music-based applications as supplementary tools in teaching listening, particularly for learners in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental aspect of learning English as a second language. Despite being one of the most essential skills in daily communication, it is often overshadowed by the more visible skills like speaking, reading, and writing. However, it is through listening that language learners receive the most linguistic input. According to (Nurhuda. H, 2016), listening plays a critical role in

communication, enabling individuals to understand and respond appropriately. Without proper listening skills, learners struggle to grasp meaning from spoken language, which eventually hampers their ability to speak fluently and confidently. Yet, many students still underestimate its importance or feel unmotivated to improve this skill, revealing a significant gap in language learning practices (Nadhira & Warni, 2021).

One major issue faced by students is their low listening comprehension, which often stems from an unrealistic expectation that they must understand every single word spoken in English. When learners encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or complex grammar structures during listening activities, they tend to panic or lose focus, leading to incomplete understanding of the overall message. This creates anxiety and discouragement, which may cause students to disengage from the learning process (Wusqo et al., 2024) . As a result, listening becomes a frustrating task rather than a skill to be developed gradually. Many students also lack the strategies needed to listen for main ideas or contextual clues, making it even harder to follow spoken English, especially in fast-paced or unfamiliar accents (Aldina et al., 2020).

One of the primary reasons for choosing Spotify over other platforms such as YouTube, BBC Learning English, or AI-based learning applications is its unique combination of simplicity, accessibility, and user engagement. Unlike YouTube, which often includes distracting visual content and advertisements, Spotify offers a focused audio-based environment that helps students concentrate solely on listening. Compared to formal platforms like BBC Learning English, which may feel too structured or advanced for some students, Spotify provides a vast collection of songs that are familiar, enjoyable, and linguistically rich, making learning feel more relatable and less intimidating. Additionally, while AI-based learning apps offer personalized learning paths, they may require higher digital literacy or paid subscriptions, which are not always accessible for all students. Spotify, on the other hand, is free, easy to navigate, and widely used among teenagers, allowing teachers to incorporate it into the classroom without the need for complex technical training. This makes Spotify a practical and effective tool for creating a more engaging, student-centered listening experience.

Another significant problem is the poor vocabulary and limited language exposure that many students experience. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students cannot make sense of what they hear, particularly in authentic listening materials such as English songs, videos, or conversations. The lack of exposure to native or natural English speech also contributes to this problem (Muhammad Fajar Sudrajat et al., 2021). In many classrooms, listening activities are limited to scripted dialogues that fail to reflect real-life conversations, leaving students unprepared for actual English usage. This lack of authentic input prevents them from improving their listening comprehension in practical, meaningful ways. Consequently, students may memorize vocabulary or grammar rules without understanding how they function in spoken contexts (Maulina et al., 2022).

Environmental factors also hinder effective listening in the classroom. Noisy surroundings, poor-quality audio devices, and lack of student concentration are common issues that reduce the effectiveness of listening tasks. In some cases, the teacher's method of delivering listening exercises is overly rigid or unengaging, making students feel bored and disconnected (Septiara & Hamzah, 2023). When students are not actively engaged in the learning process, they are less likely to retain information or develop listening habits (Manurip & Katemba, 2023). These external distractions, combined with internal struggles such as low confidence or lack of motivation, make listening a neglected and underdeveloped skill in the language learning process (Listiyaningsih, 2017).

Another critical issue lies in students' inability to process spoken English due to the complex grammar structures used in audio materials. (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023) highlighted how difficult grammar, particularly in natural speech, creates barriers for learners during listening exercises. Grammar is already a challenge for many students in reading and writing; when combined with the speed and unpredictability of spoken English, it becomes even harder to

manage. Students often fail to identify the function of specific grammatical patterns when they are embedded in fast, fluent speech. This results in confusion and misunderstanding, especially when they are required to answer comprehension questions or summarize what they have heard (Wusqo et al., 2024).

Moreover, the lack of engaging and student-centered learning tools contributes to students' declining interest in improving their listening abilities. Traditional classroom methods that rely on textbook CDs or monotonous listening drills do not capture students' attention. In contrast, students are highly immersed in technology and digital media in their daily lives. They are comfortable using smartphones and applications for entertainment, yet many schools fail to take advantage of this digital familiarity in a productive way. Teachers often overlook the potential of integrating modern apps into listening instruction, leaving a gap between students' interests and the materials provided.

The decline in listening skills is also reflected in national statistics. Based on the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index in 2024, Indonesia ranked 80th with a low proficiency score. This suggests that the general approach to English education, especially in listening, is not producing effec tive results (Andry & Tjee, 2019). If Indonesian students continue to struggle with understanding spoken English, their chances of global communication, academic success, and professional development will remain limited. (Rahayu, 2018) Therefore, it is urgent to address these issues with practical and modern solutions that align with students' digital lifestyles and language learning needs (Fitria, 2023).

One such solution is integrating the Spotify application into English listening instruction. Spotify is a widely used digital platform that provides access to millions of English songs, podcasts, and spoken content (Suwarni et al., 2023). Unlike traditional classroom audio tools, Spotify offers authentic and diverse listening materials that can expose students to real-life English in various accents, speech speeds, and vocabulary levels. Since students already use this app in their daily lives, incorporating it into language learning can reduce resistance and make listening practice more enjoyable (Salsabila et al., 2021).

The use of Spotify for English listening exercises can also increase flexibility and learner autonomy (Anissa & Suryaman, 2021). Students are no longer confined to classroom hours or textbook exercises. They can choose their preferred songs or podcast topics, listen at their own pace, and repeat audio as needed (Krisdian, 2023). This personalized learning experience can increase motivation, reduce anxiety, and build listening confidence over time. It also allows students to develop listening habits outside of the classroom, making English a part of their daily lives instead of just a school subject (Butar Butar & Katemba, 2023).

In conclusion, although listening is a key component of language acquisition, it remains one of the most difficult and neglected skills for many students. Factors such as vocabulary limitations, complex grammar, noisy environments, lack of exposure to authentic input, and unengaging teaching methods contribute to students' low performance in listening comprehension. These challenges must be addressed with innovative and student-centered strategies. Utilizing digital tools like the Spotify application represents a promising approach to enhancing students' listening skills, bridging the gap between their interests and their learning needs. With proper implementation, this method could not only improve listening ability but also foster greater enthusiasm and independence in learning English.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research applied a *pre-experimental* design, specifically the *one group pre-test and post-test design*, to investigate the impact of using the Spotify application on improving students' English listening skills. The research was driven by a major concern: students demonstrated low proficiency in understanding spoken English, particularly when it came to comprehending audio materials such as songs or dialogues. Traditional teaching methods appeared ineffective in addressing this issue,

as students often lacked motivation and engagement during listening activities. In response to this problem, the researcher implemented Spotify as an instructional tool, considering its accessibility, popularity among students, and its potential to deliver authentic listening materials in an interactive way. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to measure and compare students' listening abilities before and after the treatment, highlighting the actual impact of using Spotify in the classroom (Nguyen, 2020).

The research was conducted in October 2024 at SMP Panca Budi Medan, located on Jl. Jendral Gatot Subroto Km. 4.5, Medan Sunggal District, Medan City, North Sumatra. The subjects of the research were 25 students from class IX-2, selected as the sample to observe the effectiveness of using Spotify in a real classroom setting. The research was carried out in collaboration with the English teacher, who supported the implementation of the study and participated as an observer and collaborator. Her role was essential in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom action plan, and she provided valuable feedback to help enhance the teaching strategies used during the treatment. This cooperation ensured a more objective evaluation and smoother implementation of the innovation in the learning process(Budiasningrum & Rosita, 2022).

This research applied a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test model to examine the effectiveness of using the Spotify application in improving students' English listening skills. Conducted in October 2024 at SMP Panca Budi Medan, the study involved 25 ninth-grade students (14 females and 11 males) from class IX-2, aged between 14 and 15 years, who generally demonstrated low to moderate initial listening ability. The research was carried out over four weeks: the first week for the pre-test, two weeks of treatment, and the final week for the post-test. Students were given a gap-fill listening test using the song "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars, focusing on verbs in future tense and passive voice. During the treatment, students used Spotify to listen, practice pronunciation, analyze lyrics, and improve comprehension through interactive and engaging activities. The English teacher participated as a collaborator and observer, providing input to improve instructional strategies. Data were analyzed using percentage calculations and SPSS 26 to perform descriptive statistics and t-tests. Results showed a significant improvement in listening skills, with the post-test average score rising sharply, confirming that Spotify effectively enhanced students' listening comprehension.

The instruments of the research included a pre-test, treatment sessions, and a post-test. The pre-test was administered to assess students' prior listening comprehension by giving them a gap-fill test using the song "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars. The missing words were mainly verbs in the future tense and passive voice forms, which aligned with the grammar focus of the study. The song, with a duration of 3 minutes and 13 seconds, was played up to five times, and students were asked to complete all the blanks as they listened. The pre-test results revealed common difficulties among students in catching and understanding spoken words. Based on this, the researcher conducted four treatment sessions over one month. During the treatment, students were introduced to the Spotify application, guided through its use, and taught the grammatical structures that appeared in the lyrics. They practiced pronunciation, discussed word meanings, and sang along with the lyrics displayed on Spotify to reinforce their listening and language comprehension in a fun, engaging way. After the treatment, a post-test was given using the same format to measure any improvement in their listening abilities (Nurhasanah & Suryaman, 2022).

To analyze the data, students' scores from the pre-test and post-test were calculated using percentage formulas and categorized into levels ranging from "Very Poor" to "Excellent." For further statistical analysis, the researcher used SPSS 26 to generate descriptive statistics, including the mean score, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and results of the t-test to identify the significance of differences between the pre-test and post-test results. The primary aim of this analytical process was to determine whether Spotify, as a digital and music-based learning tool, could serve as an effective medium to address the core problem—students' low interest and competence in listening comprehension. By integrating music and technology into language

learning, this study sought to offer an innovative solution that resonates with the digital habits and preferences of today's learners (Dash, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter elaborates on the findings and provides an in-depth discussion of the results derived from the study. The data were collected through a series of tests aimed at assessing the improvement in students' listening skills following the implementation of the Spotify application as a learning tool. In this section, a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the research outcomes are presented. The discussion is anchored in the data analysis procedures and research methods detailed in the preceding chapter, offering insights into the effectiveness of the applied intervention.

Interpretation of Students' Test Result

This section focuses on the analysis of data obtained from both the pre-test and post-test results, highlighting the progress in students' listening skills before and after the implementation of the treatment. Additionally, the mean scores and standard deviations of the pre-test and post-test serve as key indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. These statistical findings provide a foundation for the researchers' interpretation and validation of the study's outcomes.

a. Classification of students' result on the pre-test, the results of the students' listening comprehension prior to the treatment were obtained through a pre-test administered during the initial meeting. The findings revealed that 14 students received very poor scores, 7 students scored poorly, 1 student attained a fair score, 2 students achieved fairly good scores, and only 1 student reached a good score. No students obtained very good or excellent scores. The total cumulative score from the pre-test was 1,090. These results indicate that the majority of students demonstrated very limited listening skills, suggesting that a significant number of them required improvement in this area.
b. Students' Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Pre-test, prior to administering the treatment and post-test, a pre-test was conducted to determine whether the students' listening abilities were at a similar level. This initial assessment allowed the researcher to identify the baseline proficiency of the students before the intervention was implemented.

Table 1. The Classification of frequency and percentage of students' knowledge on pre-test

No.	Classification	Scores	Pre-test	
			F	P
1	Excellent	96 – 100	0	0%
2	Very Good	86 – 95	0	0%
3	Good	76 – 85	1	4%
4	Fair Good	66 – 75	2	8%
5	Fair	56 – 65	1	4%
6	Poor	46 – 55	7	28%
7	Very Poor	0 – 45	14	56%
	Total		25	100%

The table above presents the frequency and percentage distribution of students' listening skill levels in class IX Regular 2 at SMP Panca Budi based on the pre-test results. None of the students (0%) achieved excellent or very good scores. Only 1 student (4%) obtained a good score, 2 students (8%) achieved fairly good scores, and 1 student (4%) received a fair score. Meanwhile, 7 students (28%) were categorized as poor, and the majority—14 students (56%)—fell into the very poor category. These scores reflect the students' listening proficiency prior to receiving any treatment.

Providing students' mean score and standard deviation were calculated from the pre-test scores as the following table below.

Table 2. Students's mean score of pre-test and standar deviation

Mean Score	Standard Deviation
43.6	14.967

The mean score of the students on the pre-test was 43.6, with a standard deviation of 14.96. These results indicate that the overall listening proficiency of the students was still at a low level. After identifying the students' weaknesses in listening skills, the researchers proceeded to implement the treatment with the aim of enhancing their listening performance and improving their subsequent test scores.

c. Classification of students' result on the post-test, following the implementation of the treatment, the researchers administered a post-test to evaluate any significant improvement in students' listening skills. The results showed notable progress: 6 students achieved excellent scores, 8 students obtained very good scores, 7 students earned good scores, 2 students received fairly good scores, and 2 students attained fair scores. Importantly, none of the students fell into the poor or very poor categories. The total post-test score reached 2,140, indicating a substantial improvement in listening proficiency compared to the pre-test results. These findings clearly demonstrate the positive impact of the treatment on students' listening abilities.

Table 3. The classification of frequency and percentage of students' knowledge on post-test

No.	Classification	Scores	Post-test	
			F	P
1	Excellent	96 – 100	6	24%
2	Very Good	86 – 95	8	32%
3	Good	76 – 85	7	28%
4	Fair Good	66 – 75	2	8%
5	Fair	56 – 65	2	8%
6	Poor	46 – 55	0	0%
7	Very Poor	0 – 45	0	0%
	Total		25	100%

The table above illustrates the frequency and percentage distribution of students' post-test achievements following the treatment. A total of 6 students (24%) achieved excellent scores, 8 students (32%) attained very good scores, and 7 students (28%) obtained good scores. Additionally, 2 students (8%) received fair scores, while another 2 students (8%) achieved fairly good scores. Notably, none of the students (0%) fell into the poor or very poor categories. These results reflect a marked improvement in students' listening skills after the intervention.

Providing both of mean score and standard deviation were calculated from post-test scores in the following table.

Table 4. Students's mean score of pre-test and standar deviation

Mean Score	Standard Deviation
85.6	11.930

As shown in the table above, the mean score of the post-test was 85.6, with a standard deviation of 11.930. This reflects a significant improvement when compared to the pre-test mean score of 43.6, indicating a shift in classification from very poor to very good. After calculating the mean scores of both the pre-test and post-test, the researchers proceeded to present the descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, as displayed in the following table.

Table 5. Descriptive statistical data

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	25	20	80	43.60	14.967
Posttest	25	60	100	85.60	11.930
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Based on the data presented, there was a significant improvement in students' listening skills following the treatment. The pre-test scores ranged from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 80, with a total score of 1,090, a mean score of 43.60, and a standard deviation of 14.967. In contrast, the post-test scores ranged from 60 to 100, yielding a total score of 2,140, a mean score of 85.60, and a standard deviation of 11.930. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test results clearly shows that both the total and mean scores increased substantially, indicating notable progress in students' listening abilities after the intervention.

d. Test of Significance (t-test), after obtaining the pre-test and post-test scores in this pre-experimental study, the researchers employed a paired sample t-test to evaluate the hypothesis. According to Widiyanto (2013:35), the paired sample t-test is a statistical method used to determine the effectiveness of a treatment by comparing the means before and after the intervention. The significance test was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, which facilitated easier analysis of the differences.

In this study, the null hypothesis (H_0) stated that the use of the Spotify application by ninth-grade students of Regular Class 2 at SMP Panca Budi Medan would not improve their listening skills. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposed that the use of the Spotify application would enhance the students' listening skills. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) would be accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_0) rejected, if the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) or the two-tailed significance (sig. 2-tailed) value was less than 0.05.

Table 6. The result of t-test paired sample test (t-test)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE TEST - POST TEST	-42.000	21.794	4.359	-50.996	-33.004	-9.635	24	.000

The t-test results showed that the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of the Spotify application significantly improved the listening skills of ninth-grade students in Regular Class 2 at SMP Panca Budi Medan.

Based on the analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores, the students demonstrated a substantial improvement, with the average score increasing from 43.60 in the pre-test to 85.60 in the post-test. Furthermore, the classification of scores shifted markedly from predominantly "very poor" to mostly "good," "very good," and "excellent" after the treatment. The statistical significance of this improvement was confirmed by the t-test, which yielded a p-value of 0.000, indicating a meaningful difference in students' listening performance before and after the intervention using Spotify.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research conducted by (Nguyen, 2020), which demonstrated that the use of music streaming platforms such as Spotify can significantly enhance students' listening comprehension by increasing their exposure to authentic language

input in a motivating format. Similarly, a study by (Budiasningrum, 2020) found that incorporating popular English songs into listening activities not only improved students' vocabulary acquisition and grammatical awareness but also boosted their confidence and interest in learning English. Both studies support the results of the present research, which showed that Spotify effectively facilitated students' listening development through engaging, real-life content that aligns with learners' digital habits and preferences.

In conclusion, the implementation of Spotify as a learning media positively influenced students' listening skills by providing engaging and authentic audio materials. This exposure helped students become more familiar with English listening contexts, thereby enhancing their auditory comprehension. These findings support the effectiveness of integrating digital platforms such as Spotify into English language learning, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, the use of the Spotify application proved to be an effective and engaging method for improving students' listening skills. Integrating music into the learning process made lessons more enjoyable and helped students feel more motivated and confident in their listening abilities. The significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test results confirmed that using Spotify positively contributed to students' comprehension, especially in identifying missing words from song lyrics and enhancing their overall listening performance. This finding highlights the potential of combining traditional teaching with digital media to create a more interactive and meaningful learning experience. Teachers are encouraged to explore the use of technology, such as Spotify, in their classrooms to support students' engagement and language development, while students are urged to view English not as a difficult subject but as a valuable and enjoyable skill for real-life communication. However, this research also had several limitations. It was conducted in a single class with only 25 participants, which may not reflect the broader student population. In addition, the study was carried out over a short period and did not measure the long-term retention of listening skills. The treatment was limited to one song and a few sessions, which may not fully capture the wider potential of using music platforms like Spotify in language learning. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more diverse samples, include a control group for comparison, and extend the study period to observe sustained learning outcomes. Exploring the effects of different music genres, levels of difficulty, or integration with other digital tools could also provide richer insights into how technology can enhance English language learning in various contexts.

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