

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Listening is an essential skill in the journey of language learning, as it establishes the foundation for effective communication and understanding. According to Listiyaningsih (2017), it is crucial for students learning English as a foreign language to develop their listening skills, as this allows them to absorb spoken information, identify pronunciation patterns, and understand meanings within context. Despite this, understanding spoken English remains one of the most challenging aspects of learning the language. This results from the rapid speech, unfamiliar terminology, casual idioms, and restricted experience with real spoken English. Alternative learning practices, including the use of music as a listening resource, have become increasingly popular among students as a way to tackle the challenges that have arisen.

Nowadays, music has been increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for language acquisition. A study conducted by College Rover (2023) titled "The Best Songs to Listen to While Studying" found that students with high academic performance (GPA 3.5–4.0) prefer listening to music from artists like Taylor Swift,

The Weeknd, and SZA during their study sessions. The research highlights that some genres of music, include electronic, classical, and instrument, can effectively enhance focus and concentration. This indicates that trend of music mere entertainment; it serves as a cognitive enhancer that facilitates the learning of academic material. In the realm of language acquisition, songs serve as a valuable resource for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, offering repetitive exposure to language patterns, reinforcing pronunciation, and enriching vocabulary. Taylor Swift is notably acknowledged for her articulate vocal delivery, organized storytelling, emotionally resonant lyrics, which render her music a valuable resource for EFL learners. Nonetheless, in spite of its prevalent application in language learning, there exists a seemingly paradoxical connection between the perceived simplicity of acquiring knowledge through her songs and the challenges that learners face when trying to understand her lyrics. While many students assert that listening to Taylor Swift music enhances their listening skill, they also express challenges in comprehending fast-paced songs, idiomatic, and complex terminology. Given this context, significant factors emerge concerning the effectiveness of using Taylor Swift's songs as an educational resource and how students navigate the challenges they encounter. Studies in linguistic have explored the complex nature of Taylor Swift lyrics. Kendong et al. (2023) conducted a corpus analysis of her songs, revealing the presence of distinct lexical bundles, frequently used terms, and unique collocational patterns. These elements can pose difficulties for students who are acquiring English as a foreign language.

Despite previous studies examining the role of music in linguistic knowledge acquisition, there remains a lack of research focusing on the actual experiences and learning strategies of students using Swift's music for listening comprehension. This study aims to fill the gap in current research by examining how students engage with Taylor Swift's songs, the challenges they face, and the strategies they employ to enhance their listening skills.

Several previous studies have examined the effectiveness of songs in improving listening comprehension. For instance, Mubarak et al. (2020) explored the impact of Disney's theme songs on students' listening skills and found significant improvements after their implementation in the classroom. Similarly, Angelia & Simanjuntak (2022) investigated the use of multimedia-based song learning and reported that over 75% of students responded positively to the integration of songs in listening instruction. Additionally, Lestary (2019) examined students' interest in listening classes when songs were incorporated, revealing a direct correlation between music and engagement. While these studies confirm that songs can positively influence language learning, they primarily focus on quantitative methodologies, assessing improvements through test scores rather than exploring students' actual experiences. None of these studies specifically address Taylor Swift's songs or analyze the contradiction between the complexity of her lyrics and their perceived effectiveness as a learning tool. Additionally, existing research fails to explore the strategies students develop to comprehend challenging song lyrics in their self-directed learning.

To address this study gap, this study focuses on exploring the lived experiences of EFL students who use Taylor Swift's music as a learning resource. By employing a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, this study seeks to gain deeper insights into students' learning processes, their challenges, and their strategies for overcoming difficulties in comprehension. Unlike previous studies, which primarily assess the effectiveness of music through statistical analysis, this study will examine students' perceptions, motivations, and cognitive engagement with music-based learning.

This study aims to investigate these kinds of learning experiences because of the unusual methods that have been noticed, in which students use Taylor Swift's songs to improve their listening skills. There will be particular attention taken to how State Islamic University Antasari Banjarmasin students approach and comprehend the process of learning to listen through music, as well as the techniques they use to deal with the complexity of the lyrics and how this helps them become more proficient listeners. To provide important insights into the application of innovative learning resources in an academic setting, this study aims to not only comprehend the successful use of Taylor Swift's songs as a teaching tool but also to investigate the in-depth learning experiences that accompany this process. Furthermore, it's essential to highlight that the Qur'an, underscores the importance of both learning and attentive listening. In surah Al-A'raf (7:204), it is articulated that,

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

This verse highlights the importance of attentive listening, which is a fundamental component of language learning. Therefore, this study aligns with the teaching of the Qur'an in emphasizing the value of listening skills for EFL students. Similarly, the Hadith states:

إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ بِالتَّعَلُّمِ وَإِنَّمَا الْجِلْمُ بِالتَّحَلُّمِ

“Knowledge is only acquired through learning, while politeness is attained by striving to be polite. Whoever trains himself in goodness will be granted it, and whoever guards himself from evil will be protected.” (Narrated by Ath-Thabrani, No. 2663)

This Hadith emphasizes that knowledge is gained through continuous learning and dedication. The cultivation of listening skills in language learning adheres to a similar principle—students need to consistently interact with spoken English, interpret meaning through ongoing exposure, and enhance their comprehension abilities gradually. Music serves as an engaging resource that allows students to immerse themselves in the target language, transforming listening practice into an enjoyable and motivating experience. By adding the fun and social significance of music into the learning environment, this study reaches beyond typical memory techniques and improves students' pronunciation and comprehension of language structures through music (Yildirim et al., 2023). This study aims to thoroughly explore how EFL students engage with Taylor Swift's

songs to enhance their listening comprehension and emphasizes personal learning experiences instead of just evaluating language proficiency through test scores, providing a deeper insight into how music enhances language acquisition in a genuine and significant manner.

B. Definition of Key Terms

To avert misinterpretation in this study, in this chapter there are some definitions of key terms that are essential to recognize as display:

1. Listening skill refers to the ability to understand spoken language, recognize the speaker's intention, and process audio messages. It is a core language skill that helps learners identify sounds, vocabulary, and meaning from verbal input.
2. Exploring refers to the act of examining, investigating, or studying something in depth. In this study, it means analyzing how students experience and respond to the use of Taylor Swift's songs in learning English listening skills.
3. Students' experience refers to how learners perceive, react to, and benefit from specific learning methods. In this study, it focuses on students' personal responses and reflections when using Taylor Swift's songs to improve their listening skills.
4. Taylor Swift songs refers to the music created by the American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, known for emotional storytelling and personal lyrics. In this study, the songs used as listening materials include "All Too Well," "Enchanted," "The Archer," "Daylight," "Begin Again," and "You're on Your

Own, Kid.” These songs are used to help students improve their English listening comprehension through authentic and engaging input.

C. Research Questions

1. How does Taylor Swift’s song engage EFL students’ interest in learning English listening?
2. What are the challenges that students faced when using Taylor Swift songs in learning English listening?

D. Objectives of Study

1. To identify the EFL students’ interest in learning English by listening to Taylor Swift songs.
2. To analyze the challenges that students faced when using Taylor Swift songs in learning English listening.

E. Significance of Study

1. For the EFL students, this study provides an in-depth examination of the integration of music into the language-learning process. The results will assist students in understanding the advantages of utilizing songs as an additional resource for enhancing listening abilities, pronunciation, and vocabulary development. By understanding the experiences and challenges faced by other learners, students can employ more effective listening strategies, including

active engagement with lyrics, repeated exposure to song content, and contextual analysis of figurative language. This study encourages students to engage in self-directed learning with increased confidence, using authentic, real-world materials that enhance the enjoyment and relevance of language acquisition in their everyday lives.

2. For teachers, this research offers important educational insights into how music can improve listening comprehension. Through analyzing students' interactions with Taylor Swift songs, educators can increase their understanding of students' preferences, challenges, and approaches to learning through music. This study emphasizes the importance of incorporating authentic listening materials into the curriculum, going beyond conventional classroom activities to feature engaging and linguistically diverse resources. Educators can utilize these findings to create more impactful lesson plans, integrating lyric analysis, pronunciation practice, and discussion of figurative language to improve student understanding. This study may also inspire teachers to investigate a variety of musical genres and artists to meet diverse linguistic and cultural learning needs, ensuring that music-based teaching is inclusive and beneficial to all learners.

3. For future study. Other researchers could investigate similar topics at different student levels. Future research may also be quantitative methods to evaluate the impact of music-based learning on students' academic achievement, incorporating a data-driven perspective to the qualitative observations of this study. To gain deeper insight into how music supports language acquisition among diverse student populations, examine a variety of educational settings, including elementary schools, universities, or multilingual learning environments.