

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The opening chapter introduces the foundation of the research. It begins with the background of the study, followed by the research questions, research purposes, significance, scope, conceptual framework, research hypothesis, and a review of previous studies.

A. Background Study

In the era of digital globalization, how individuals are exposed to foreign languages has diversified significantly, particularly through the integration of technology and media into daily life. Among university students, it has become a common habit to listen to English songs on any digital platforms, especially Spotify. While primarily consumed for entertainment, music can serve as a medium for incidental language learning, especially vocabulary acquisition (Schmitt, 2008; Webb, 2020). Given the frequency and accessibility of English music, it is worth exploring whether such habits measurably contribute to language development. However, whether this exposure leads to measurable vocabulary development remains an open question, particularly in EFL contexts.

In addition to its growing role in language exposure, Spotify has become one of the popular global music streaming platforms. It had around 678 million monthly active users and 268 million premium subscribers worldwide, holding approximately 31.7% of the global music streaming market share (SocialPlug, 2025). In 2025, this application boasts approximately 640 million monthly active users, including around 252 million premium subscribers. With nearly 55% of users under 35 years old, Spotify clearly resonates with young adults, including university students. Furthermore, features such as personalized playlists, lyric displays, and offline listening make it particularly suitable for incidental language exposure. These features have a potential for learners to encounter recurrent vocabulary in meaningful contexts, thereby supporting incidental vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners.

In relation to this phenomenon, preliminary observations were conducted through informal conversations with several EFL university freshmen. It was found that they are very familiar with the Spotify application. Most of them use Spotify because its interface is easy to access, and it provides song lyrics that help them understand the meaning of the songs. Furthermore, some of them search for the meaning of unfamiliar words using digital dictionaries. They admitted that this habit helps increase their knowledge of English vocabulary. In addition, some students tend to share specific parts of song lyrics that relate to their feelings on social media, indicating a deeper engagement with the language content.

Supporting this observation, previous studies have indicated that informal exposure to English through media, particularly music, can facilitate vocabulary learning. For instance, Medina (1993) found that music enhances memory retention and contextual understanding of vocabulary, while Murphey (1992) emphasized that repeated listening to songs aids in the acquisition of lexical chunks and collocations. Moreover, Peters (2018) suggests that learners can incidentally acquire new vocabulary through frequent exposure to audio input, particularly when they are engaged and motivated by the content. Several studies have also explored this relationship empirically. Manurung and Sitorus (2017) found a significant positive correlation between students' habit of listening to English songs and their vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Putri (2020) showed that students who frequently listened to English songs performed better in vocabulary tests. These findings are further supported by Almutairi (2020), who emphasized that English songs provide rich contextual exposure, facilitating vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, Suryani (2022) highlighted Spotify as an effective platform for incidental vocabulary learning. Taken together, these studies suggest a meaningful relationship between music exposure and vocabulary development.

In language learning, vocabulary is regarded as one of the fundamental components of language proficiency, as it supports the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Vocabulary knowledge is essential for both understanding and producing language, and insufficient vocabulary may significantly impede learners' language development (Nation, 2001). To assess learners' vocabulary proficiency, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),

established by the Council of Europe, offers an internationally recognized framework that categorizes language competence into six proficiency levels, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), providing a consistent and standardized basis for language assessment.

In line with this framework, CEFR has also been aligned with the Indonesian educational context. In the Merdeka Curriculum, English is divided into regular and advanced levels at the upper secondary stage. According to the Head of *Badan Standar Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan* (BSKAP) No. 032/H/KR/2024, under Section V.2 “Learning Outcomes of Advanced English,” the minimum expected outcomes are aligned with the CEFR at the B1 level (BSKAP, 2024). This level indicates that learners are capable of understanding texts, interacting with some degree of fluency, and producing clear and structured communication. This alignment demonstrates the expectation that students reach an independent user level of English proficiency.

The term freshmen is commonly used to refer to first-year university students who are in the initial stage of their academic transition and require specific support in adapting to higher education (Erickson, Peters, and Strommer, 2009). In this study, freshmen refer to undergraduate students in their first year who have not yet progressed to the second year of study. In the language acquisition context, particularly among students who do not grow up speaking English as their native language, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student environment, learners must acquire English as a non-native language for academic and communicative purposes. This is especially relevant for freshmen, who are first-year university students in the early stage of their academic transition and are still adapting to new learning environments. At this stage, learners often need engaging and accessible input to support their language improvement.

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence presented above, this study aims to examine whether there is a correlation between EFL university freshmen’s habit of listening to English songs on Spotify and their English vocabulary mastery as measured by the CEFR. To identify this habit, this research uses Spotify as a specific medium for listening to English songs. Spotify allows users to stream music globally and provides a lyric feature that supports comprehension. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on vocabulary mastery as a language aspect facilitated by exposure to English songs.

However, despite the popularity of English music and the supporting theoretical and empirical evidence, there remains limited empirical research that specifically examines the relationship between students' listening habits on Spotify and their vocabulary mastery level as measured by CEFR standards, particularly in EFL contexts. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the correlation between the frequency and intensity of freshmen's habit in listening to English songs and their English vocabulary mastery. Understanding this relationship may provide insights into the pedagogical potential of using music as a supplementary tool in language education.

Finally, this research is limited to examining students' habits in listening to English songs through Spotify as a widely used mobile application among young users. The use of CEFR as a measure of vocabulary mastery is aligned with the Indonesian curriculum as regulated by BSKAP. Moreover, this study employs a correlational method to identify the relationship between listening habits and vocabulary mastery without involving experimental treatment.

B. Research Questions

There are three research questions in this research, as follows:

1. What is the EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify?
2. What are the CEFR levels of EFL students' English vocabulary mastery?
3. How significant is the correlation between the EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify and the CEFR level of their English vocabulary mastery?

C. Research Purposes

By the research question above, the purposes of the research are as follows:

1. To find out the data of the EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify.
2. To describe the CEFR levels of English vocabulary mastery among EFL university freshmen.
3. To find out a significant correlation between the EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify and the CEFR level of their English vocabulary mastery.

D. Research Significances

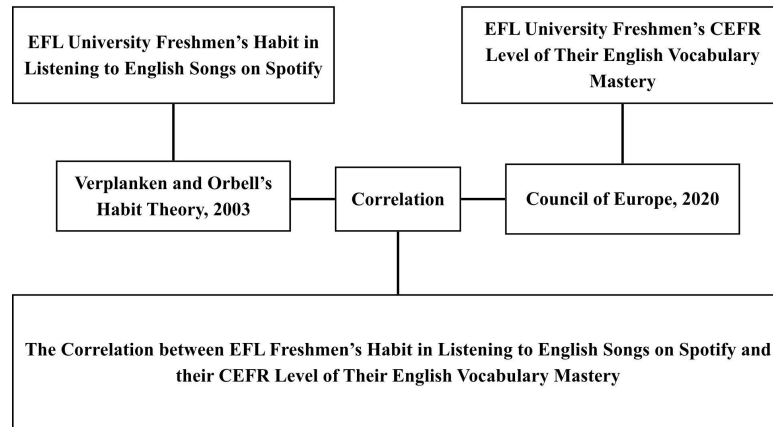
Research is determined to be useful and has an impact on the educational field in the future. As a result, this research was designed to provide a theoretical and practical contribution to the future of education. Particularly in the vocabulary aspect of English teaching and learning, so that the teacher and learner have more media in English learning through music.

Theoretically, this research is expected to provide insights into the role of English music as an informal learning tool that contributes to vocabulary development among EFL learners, especially freshmen. It aims to explore how repeated exposure to lyrics, rhythmic patterns, and contextual language in songs may facilitate the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary, thereby enriching students' lexical resources beyond the traditional classroom setting. Practically, the findings of this study are anticipated to offer an alternative method for improving English language skills, particularly in the area of vocabulary. By utilizing an activity that is generally perceived as entertainment, such as listening to music, the study aims to highlight its potential as a meaningful and enjoyable way to enhance vocabulary mastery in English learning.

E. Research Scope

This study focuses on EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English music on Spotify, correlated to students' CEFR level in vocabulary mastery. The EFL University freshmen in this research refer to first-year students in a state Islamic university in Indonesia. Furthermore, the limitation in this study is the correlation between students' habits in listening to English songs on Spotify and vocabulary mastery.

F. Conceptual Framework



Vocabulary is a most important key component in mastering English, especially for EFL learners. Without mastering vocabulary, students may face difficulties in understanding, speaking, and writing effectively. Vocabulary knowledge supports all four language skills and is essential for meaningful communication (Nation, 2001). Therefore, developing a strong vocabulary foundation is crucial to the overall success of English language learning. Mastering vocabulary is not only about recognizing words (receptive), but also about being able to produce them accurately (productive) (Schmitt, 2008). Many learners often know more words passively (receptive) than they can actively use (productive). This indicates that vocabulary learning is not merely about memorization, but also about active usage. To understand how words function in context, learners need meaningful exposure. In this regard, music can serve as an alternative medium to provide such context, enabling vocabulary to develop from receptive knowledge into productive use.

While listening to music has become a popular part of university students' daily lives, they often do activities such as studying, commuting, or relaxing while listening to music. With the rise of streaming platforms like Spotify, students have easy and constant access to music, including English songs. Music listening is one of the most common leisure activities among young adults, and it plays both emotional and cognitive roles (Krause, 2015). This habitual exposure to English music may unintentionally support language learning, particularly in vocabulary development through repeated and contextualized listening. Repeated exposure to songs improves learners' recognition of

spoken forms, including connections and collocations, with stable retention over time (Tilwani, 2022). This suggests that songs can serve as an effective medium for incidental vocabulary learning in EFL contexts, as they provide meaningful contexts through lyrics, themes, and emotional expression, allowing learners to use vocabulary more productively.

Among various digital platforms, Spotify is considered a relevant medium because it provides features that may support EFL university freshmen's vocabulary learning habits. Through its lyric feature, students can read song lyrics while listening and may be encouraged to look up the meaning of unfamiliar words. In addition, Spotify's listening history and annual "most played" records can represent how frequently students listen to English songs. Therefore, Spotify is used in this research as the medium to measure students' habit of listening to English songs, which may relate to their English vocabulary mastery based on CEFR levels.

To evaluate this relationship, the CEFR, developed by the Council of Europe, is used as a standardized framework for measuring language proficiency across six levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). It provides clear descriptors of learners' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including vocabulary range and control. The CEFR ensures consistency and objectivity in language assessment. In this study, CEFR serves as the framework to evaluate students' English vocabulary mastery, offering a structured basis to analyze their proficiency in relation to their listening habits.

G. Previous studies

The researcher's idea in this research is inspired by one research done by Astuti (2023), who investigated the correlation between senior high school students' habit in watching English videos on YouTube and the CEFR level of their English vocabulary mastery. The population in the study was 173 participants from the 11th class of SMAN 1 Majalaya. The result of the study shows that there is a significant correlation between students' habits in watching English YouTube videos and the CEFR level of their vocabulary mastery skills. The population of this research is the 11th-grade high school at a Senior High School in Bandung. And this research suggests that the next researcher correlated issues with hers to use different populations and investigate what kinds of content can increase proficiency in vocabulary, especially based on their CEFR level.

In another study, Fitri, Syarfi, and Supriusman (2024) conducted a correlational study among first-year English Department students (sample: 30 out of 60) at Universitas Riau. Using a listening-habit questionnaire and a vocabulary test, they calculated Pearson's correlation and found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.714$, $p < 0.05$) between frequency of listening to English songs and vocabulary mastery. This research makes the hypothesis stronger that English music can be an alternative method for acquiring vocabulary.

Furthermore, Komariyah (2023) reveals the effectiveness of using English songs to improve students' vocabulary mastery in high schools. Komariyah conducted an experimental study with 15 students from SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Samarinda during the 2022/2023 academic year. The experimental group listened to English songs, while the control group engaged in traditional vocabulary memorization. The results showed a statistically significant increase in vocabulary mastery for the music-exposed group, with the average score rising from 61 in the pre-test to 76 in the post-test. It shows that music is a better alternative learning method than memorization methods for vocabulary.

There is research from other countries that also sets EFL students as a subject. Murad, Assadi, and Othman (2023) conducted a correlational study to examine the impact of listening to English songs on incidental vocabulary acquisition among EFL Arab students in Israel. The participants were 31 tenth-grade secondary school students from various cities, such as Nazareth and Sakhnin, as well as villages including Reine and Kfar-Kana in northern Israel, consisting of both male and female learners. Data were collected through two questionnaires, and Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between song listening habits and vocabulary acquisition. The results indicated that listening to English songs significantly enhanced students' motivation to learn new vocabulary and positively influenced their attitudes toward learning English.

Another relevant study was conducted by Butar and Katemba (2023) to explore EFL students' perceptions of vocabulary learning by listening to English songs on Spotify. The study revealed that students' perceptions of listening to English songs were related to their vocabulary learning. Using a descriptive quantitative design, a questionnaire was distributed to 97 EFL learners to examine how students' habits and

attitudes in listening to English songs were associated with their vocabulary learning. The findings also showed that the majority of participants expressed positive views about listening to English songs on Spotify, especially because the lyrics featured supported their English vocabulary learning.

H. Hypothesis

A hypothesis in quantitative research is when the researcher produces a prediction or conjecture about the result of the research on the correlation among several characteristics (Creswell, 2012). In this study, there are two variables: the first is the EFL University freshmen's habit in listening to English music on Spotify as variable "X" or the dependent variable, and the CEFR level on vocabulary mastery is the "Y" variable, which means it is the independent variable. The hypothesis in this research is formulated as follows:

1. Null hypothesis (H_0): There is no correlation between EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify and the CEFR level of their English Vocabulary Mastery.
2. Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There is a correlation between EFL university freshmen's habit of listening to English songs on Spotify and the CEFR level of their English Vocabulary Mastery.