

# AN INVESTIGATION OF SONG-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ON TENSES LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

Grammar is one of the essential components in English that contains many elements like tenses. English tenses commonly become a problem among Indonesian students. Every English teacher, therefore, is required to provide creative and effective ways of teaching English tenses. This research aimed at investigating the benefits of English songs as teaching devices, the considerations in using English songs, and the teaching procedures. For the third variable, the researcher only focuses on the most frequently used tenses named present simple. The method employed was descriptive qualitative, and the researchers did this current study through three phases. They are data gathering, data analysis, and data presentation. This study reveals several significant findings. Firstly, English songs have many benefits called creating a positive learning environment, motivating the students, giving cultural information, and teaching linguistics knowledge. Secondly, there are at least five considerations in using English songs as teaching devices. They are the teaching topics, language level, student age, cultural issue, and song accessibility. Thirdly, there are three essential teaching procedures. They are warm-up activity, main activity, and additional activity. Overall, English songs are useful teaching devices in the EFL context, and they can effectively be used to teach language elements like tenses.

**Keywords:** English songs; EFL; grammar; tenses

## INTRODUCTION

The English language which is a compulsory subject in junior and senior high school commonly becomes a problematic subject for Indonesian students. Most Indonesian students do not have enough exposure to English since most of them only learn it at school. In short, the position of English as a foreign language often influences the success of the teaching and learning process.

Besides its position as a foreign language, another factor like ineffective teaching media might create boredom or even confusion among students in EFL classrooms. That is why every English teacher is demanded to always use effective and attractive teaching media so that the students can comprehend the materials well. Effective teaching devices

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might also encourage the students to do their roles as the center of the teaching process. Teachers are only facilitators in the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the center of the process is the students (Jagtab, 2016; Suwartono & Aniuranti, 2018; O'Dwyer, 2006).

One of the suggested media in teaching English is songs. Hornby (2010) defines a song as a short piece of music with words that you sing. Songs generally express a feeling, experience, and sometimes a story. Many songs always have certain messages for the listeners, and its melodious rhyme might influence the listeners and force them to be fallen on its lyric.

In the EFL context, English songs are assumed to bring a lot of merits. Songs are precious devices to teach four skills in English namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing as well as the elements of English like vocabulary and grammar (Abidin, et.al, 2001; Neila, 2013; Saricoban & Metin, 2000). Tsai & Lin (2001) add that like ice and fire, both grammar and songs are divergent in nature: One is full of regularities and even ice-cold boredom, while the other is full of fire-like emotions and inspirational melodies that enchant one. Nevertheless, the marrying of these two radically different elements into the family of language instruction have been proved successful. Thus, English songs are possible to be implemented as teaching media in the EFL context due to their merits to teach skills and language components.

Besides its educational benefits, using songs in EFL classrooms can give psychological benefits. Songs may create a conducive classroom atmosphere, decreasing students' stress and anxiety, encouraging their interests, and motivating them to learn the target language. Song provides a lot of expressions that affect memory due to its melody. Schoepp (2001) states that songs are one of the media to reach effective language learning and stimulate alive class with deeper discussion, language practice, and create a comfortable atmosphere during the class going on. Thus, bringing songs into the EFL classroom might also create a comfortable environment that affects the learning results.

One of the English components requiring more attention is tenses. Tenses are related to time, and time refers to 'when' action takes place (Rahman & Ali, 2015). For Indonesian, English tenses which consist of so many types generally become an issue.

The interlingual transfer is often assumed as the most influential factor. The Indonesian language has a totally different system in expressing the time of an action or event.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, English songs that have many benefits are effective media to teach difficult language components like tenses. Thus, there are there objectives of this study. They are investigating the benefits of using songs, examining the consideration needed in using songs and presenting the stages in using songs for teaching English tenses. This article focuses on the tenses with the highest frequency of use called the simple present (Alzuhairy, 2012; Krmasky, 1969). This study brings some gains for other English teachers or researchers. They will be more careful in using the songs to teach grammar components like tenses or other components or even skills. They also might know how to arrange several teaching stages by paying attention to the ways English songs are used.

## **METHOD**

The method employed in this study was descriptive qualitative, and this study was conducted through several stages. Firstly, the writers looked for some theories related to the topic of this study. The theories were related to the advantages of songs and considerations in using songs. Secondly, the writers developed ideas to use songs in teaching tenses. The last stage was presenting the data analysis through words and tables.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Benefits of English Songs as Teaching Devices***

Songs are considered as effective teaching media in the EFL context due to its advantages. After reading several sources related to the variable, the authors concluded four main benefits of songs as teaching media. They are creating a positive learning environment, motivating the students, giving cultural information, and teaching linguistics aspects. Here is a brief description.

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### 1. Creating a positive learning environment

Vishnevskaja & Zhou (2019) state that music is one of the most effective ways of influencing the emotional behavior of school children because they perceive singing not as an educational process, but rather as a game or an activity for relaxation. Such activities not only completely change the atmosphere of the lesson but also contribute to the unconscious recognition of new words and expressions. Besides, Aniuranti & Rizkina (2019) explain in their experimental study that the songs as teaching devices might create a comfortable circumstance for learning tenses since students in the control group looked happy and relaxed while learning past simple using a song. Thus, songs have power in creating a comfortable atmosphere in learning English that makes the students feel comfortable learning the target language.

### 2. Motivating the students

Songs generally have varied themes or even stories delivered through its lyrics, and these commonly influence the listeners' feelings. When the listeners love or like a song, it might encourage them to acquire the language. Vishnevskaja & Zhou (2019) point out that almost all popular songs are related somehow to themes of friendship, love, apparitions, grief, and others that are commonly associated feelings of people. Since most young people are interested in a wide range of cultural phenomena outside of classes, songs can be a motivating and unique teaching tool.

### 3. Giving cultural information

Songs as authentic learning sources may also teach a lesson dealing with cultural issues. Learning a language can't be separated from learning its culture. The song plays a role in the sources of cultural information (Vishnevskaja & Zhou, 2019). Saricoban & Metin (2000) add that songs also give new insights into the target culture.

### 4. Teaching linguistics knowledge

English songs are regarded as effective teaching media since they can be used to teach four skills in English called speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Also, songs are regarded as precious tools to teach linguistics aspects like vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Abidin, et.al, 2001; Neila, 2013; Saricoban & Metin,

2000; Vishnevskaja & Zhou, 2019). In short, songs can be implemented as teaching devices in the EFL context.

Overall, songs are possible to be brought to EFL classrooms due to its merits. Songs create a comfortable environment to learn English, and this might motivate the students to learn English more. Besides, the song is possible to be devices in teaching linguistics components like tenses. Songs also can be used to inform cultural values that cannot be parted from the process of language learning.

### *Considerations in Selecting the Right Songs*

Even though the effectiveness of songs as teaching devices is undeniable, it does not mean that every song can be used in our classes. As learning facilitators, English teachers have to contemplate some paramount consideration dealing with the use of songs in the EFL classrooms. Simpson (2015) points out five essential considerations in using songs as teaching media. Here is a brief explanation.

#### 1. Teaching topic

The focus/topic of the lesson has to be carefully thought of. Every teacher has to consider whether the lesson is going to focus on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or a particular topic. Although the focus of the lesson is important, every teacher does not necessarily place a limit on what they can do with the song. For instance, a teacher might wish to use the song in question to exemplify a particular verb tense and structure your lesson accordingly, but she/he might at the same time wish to take the opportunity to look at those interesting idioms in the lyrics.

#### 2. Language level

Every teacher has to pay attention to the student level. Make sure that the songs chosen would not be too difficult or too easy for the students. Lower levels will become extremely frustrated with fast-delivered lyrics, for instance, while simple repetitive lyrics might not be interesting for more advanced-level learners.

### 3. Student age

Every teacher has to make sure that the song chosen is appropriate for the students' age. If we are a teacher of young learners, we will probably want to use songs that are repetitive and very easy to understand. For teenagers, however, use contemporary or fairly recent pop and rock songs. We might ask our students' opinions about the song. Alternatively, for adult learners, who will probably have a more open approach to classes, use songs that are interesting to their age group

### 4. Cultural issue

The next consideration is the culture. Every teacher is suggested to also consider what kinds of things generally are not acceptable in the culture in which we teach. Whatever we do, do not use music solely based on our own cultural norms. Consider the audience and their sensibilities; even better, let them choose the songs that we use.

### 5. Song accessibility

Every teacher has to consider how to access the songs. Nowadays, we can use YouTube or find practically any song on this website. Nevertheless, an mp3, which does not need a connection, or even a good old-fashioned CD, can often be a useful backup.

Based on the previous explanations, every teacher might use English songs as teaching devices through several considerations. All those five considerations might help the teachers to use songs effectively. In this present study, the researchers have considered all those five things in deciding the most relevant song to teach the simple present as the most frequently used tenses.

### ***Teaching Procedures***

In English, there are many kinds of tenses the students need to master well, but the most frequently used is present tense so that the researchers only present the teaching procedures in using a song to teach present as an instance. The song chosen was Demi Lovato's song entitle *Gift of a Friend*. This song is suitable for many levels including

junior, senior or vocational and even university students. This songs can be used effectively in three phases called warm-up activity, main activity, and additional activity.

### ***Warm-up activity***

In this stage, the teachers might doing a warm-up activity to prepare their students. The simplest way to do this is by asking several light questions, for instance, *Have you ever heard the song? Do like the song? Why do you like the song?, etc.* After asking some questions related to the song, the teachers might explain the instructions clearly so that the students understand well about the thing they have to do while they are listening to the songs.

### ***Main activity***

The next stage after doing warming up is listening to the song, and the students have to fill in the blanks. The teacher might play the song twice or more. This will depend on the student level. The blank parts use present tense because the main objective is teaching present simple.

**Listen to the song carefully then fill in the blanks.**

#### **Gift Of A Friend**

**By: Demi Lovato**

Sometimes you think you'll be fine by yourself  
'Cause a dream \_\_\_\_\_ (1) that you make all alone  
It's easy to feel like you \_\_\_\_\_ (2) help  
But it's harder to walk on your own  
You'll change inside  
When you realize  
**Reff:**  
The world \_\_\_\_\_ (3) to life  
And \_\_\_\_\_ (4) bright  
From beginning to end  
When you \_\_\_\_\_ (5) a friend  
By your side

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That helps you to find

The beauty you are

When you \_\_\_\_\_ (6) your heart

And \_\_\_\_\_ (7) in

The gift of a friend

The gift of a friend

Someone who knows when \_\_\_\_\_ (8) and \_\_\_\_\_ (9)

There through the highs and the lows

Someone to count on, someone who \_\_\_\_\_ (10)

Beside you wherever you go

You'll change inside

When you realize

**Back to the Reff**

The gift of a friend

When your hope \_\_\_\_\_ (11)

Shattering to the ground

You, you \_\_\_\_\_ (12) all alone

When you \_\_\_\_\_ (13) which way to go

There's no signs leading you home

You're not alone

**Back to the Reff**

When you believe in

When you believe in

The gift of a friend

After completing the song lyrics, the teacher then discuss the answers with the students. The teacher might elicit the answers on the whiteboard, and she/he starts to guide the students to comprehend the concept of present simple. It is also possible to ask the students to change some sentences in the lyrics into positive, negative, or even question sentences. Here is the answers:



Table 1. The blank parts of the song

| No | The Answers   |
|----|---------------|
| 1  | is a wish     |
| 2  | don't need    |
| 3  | Comes         |
| 4  | everything's  |
| 5  | Have          |
| 6  | Open          |
| 7  | Believe       |
| 8  | you're lost   |
| 9  | you're scared |
| 10 | Cares         |
| 11 | crashes down  |
| 12 | Feel          |
| 13 | don't know    |

The above table shows that the song contains of nominal and verbal sentences in present simple. It is very effective to teach those two types at the same time.

#### ***Additional activity***

The additional activity that might be done by the teachers is asking the students to create their sentences using present simple. The teachers might ask them to create sentences using some words from the lyric or create their sentences without providing certain words. This activity is used to make sure that the students can use present simple. They not only understand the concept but also be able to use the concept in their communication.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

This current study examines the benefits of using English songs as teaching devices, the considerations in using English songs, and the teaching procedures. For the third variable, the researcher only focuses on the most frequently used tenses named present simple. This study reveals several essential findings. Firstly, English songs have

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many benefits including creating a positive learning environment, motivating the students, giving cultural information, and teaching linguistics knowledge. Secondly, there are at least five considerations in using English songs as teaching devices called teaching topic, language level, student age, cultural issue, and song accessibility. Thirdly, there are three teaching procedures. They are warm-up activity, main activity, and additional activity. Overall, English songs are considered as useful teaching devices in teaching grammar elements like tenses.

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