The Effectiveness of Using Best Friend Song by Rex Orange County in Enhancing Second Grade Students Asking and Giving Opinion

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in asking and giving opinions. The method used is a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest type quasi-experimental design. The research sample consisted of 24 eleventh-grade students from SMA Istiqomah Bandung, selected through purposive sampling technique. The research instrument in the form of an oral test was administered before and after the treatment of learning with song media. The results of the data analysis show a significant increase in the average student scores, from 64.17 on the pretest to 85.04 on the posttest. The paired sample t-test produced a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the use of the song was effective in improving students' speaking abilities in the context of asking and giving opinions. Thus, popular songs can be used as an enjoyable and contextual alternative learning medium to enhance students' oral competence in English language learning at the secondary school level.

1. Introduction

Language learning is an ongoing and dynamic process that begins at birth and extends throughout an individual's life, allowing the development of essential skills necessary for social and professional interactions. According to Rao (2018), language is a fundamental tool through which individuals express ideas, emotions, build meaningful relationships, and reflect on their own thoughts and feelings. Speaking, as an active and primary mode of oral communication, occupies a central role in this process. Humans naturally acquire speaking skills before reading and writing, which makes oral communication the most used form in daily life. However, many students feel that learning to speak in English is something difficult and challenging. As expressed by (Nishanthi, 2018), this perception arises because students tend to view fluent speaking ability as something very difficult to achieve.

Speaking ability is one of the important productive skills to master in learning a foreign language (Afifah & Devana, 2020). Mastery of English by non-native speakers will make them high-quality individuals in the future. (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012) state that many language learners, both in EFL and ESL contexts, want to improve their speaking skills.

According to Wertsch (2007), Vygotsky believed that speaking serves not only as a tool for conveying thoughts, but is an integral part of the thinking process itself. In this view, speaking and thinking do not operate separately, but rather interact with each other in a dynamic dialectical unity (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Vygotsky emphasized that when someone begins to express their thoughts through language, a transformative process occurs where thoughts that were initially holistic and undivided begin to be structured and analyzed through discourse. This process progresses from inner speech to observable forms of social language. Thus, speaking is not only the end result of the thinking process, but also contributes to shaping and influencing how individuals think, especially in the context of social interaction and cognitive development.

Effective speaking skill mastery involves acquiring several linguistic aspects simultaneously, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension of utterance meaning (Leong et al., 2017). The importance of speaking skills extends beyond academic contexts; it is critical for everyday communication, professional settings, and building social relationships. However, in the classroom context, according to Baker & Westrup (2003), speaking skills are often only understood as the repetition of sentences, dialogues, or the pronunciation of words in English. Repetition can indeed serve as basic practice, but it is not sufficient to develop students' communicative competence. To address this, Burns (2019), who states that speaking is a complex skill that involves cognitive, physical, and socio-cultural processes.

In fact, according to (Ali, 2022), speaking skills can be more important than writing skills because they reflect a comprehensive understanding of various linguistic aspects and serve as the primary medium for direct communication. According to Ghafar & Raheem (2023), communication is a fundamental need for individuals to convey information and thoughts. In order for communication to be effective, the speaker must be able to alternate between being a listener and a message deliverer. Moreover, authentic communication aims to accomplish specific tasks, such as conveying messages, seeking information, or expressing opinions (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012).

In parallel with speaking skill development, integrating music, particularly songs, in language learning has gained attention for its pedagogical value. Songs serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a powerful medium that conveys emotions, cultural values, and language patterns naturally and contextually (Simanjuntak & Uswar, 2021). Music serves as an effective medium that supports the enhancement of various language skills, particularly in listening, pronunciation, speaking fluency, and understanding the culture of native speakers (Eslit, 2023). According to (Tovmasyan & Ghazaryan, 2021), songs also serve as authentic

materials that reflect the culture of native speakers. Thus, students not only learn the language structurally but also understand the habits, values, and traditions of the speakers of that language. Songs facilitate contextual learning that contrasts with traditional mechanistic methods by enabling learners to internalize language features within a social and cultural framework. Additionally, According to (Bsharat et al., 2021), who state that songs can create an enjoyable learning atmosphere, combining vocabulary with rhythm to stimulate various student senses and enhance motivation, both individually and collectively. However, the selection of songs must consider social and cultural appropriateness to align with educational goals and institutional values, ensuring a respectful and inclusive learning environment (Bsharat et al., 2021).

Among the essential speaking skills emphasized in English language learning are the abilities to ask and give opinions, reflecting the interpersonal function of language in social interactions. Mastery of these skills entails both linguistic competence—accurate grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction—and communicative competence—the ability to use language appropriately in specific social contexts (Niswatun et al., 2022). Teaching strategies such as guided conversations have been shown to effectively enhance these competencies by providing semi-structured but communicative practice environments, helping learners develop confidence and fluency in expressing and responding to opinions (Syaifuddin, 2023). Moreover, incorporating relevant and engaging media such as songs supports these skills by offering authentic language input rich in idiomatic expressions and social interactions, while also reducing affective barriers like anxiety and fear of errors.

Current literature underscores the value of innovative, contextual, and multimodal learning environments in enhancing English speaking skills. Research has demonstrated that the use of musical media, especially among young learners, significantly increases motivation, engagement, and general speaking ability (Arief & Isnan, 2020). Similarly, the integration of communicative pedagogies with modern technologies fosters fluency and confidence, highlighting the necessity to adapt teaching approaches to contemporary learning needs (Tiu et al., 2023). The gaps remain, notably a paucity of studies addressing the specific impact of popular songs relevant to teenagers on targeted speaking skills such as asking and giving opinions, particularly at the high school level (Niswatun et al., 2022). This is an area that warrants further empirical investigation.

Therefore, the present research aims to explore the effectiveness of using the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County as a contextual and affective learning medium tailored to high school students. The study focuses on quantitatively evaluating the song's impact on enhancing students' speaking skills, specifically in the domain of asking and giving opinions. By addressing this gap, the research seeks to contribute to the development of more relevant, engaging, and meaningful English language teaching methods that meet the contemporary educational needs of adolescent learners.

2. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of using the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in the context of asking and giving opinions. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), quantitative research is an approach that emphasizes the objective collection and analysis of numerical data through standard instruments, such as surveys or tests, to test hypotheses and draw statistically generalizable conclusions.

The research subjects were 24 eleventh-grade students at SMA Istiqomah Bandung, selected through purposive sampling technique. The instrument used was an oral speaking test designed in the form of a group conversation simulation using an assessment rubric based on six aspects: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task completion.

Research Instruments

The test is conducted twice, namely a pretest before the treatment and a posttest after the treatment. The test is designed in the form of role-playing or small group discussions with conversation themes relevant to the song's content. The assessment is conducted directly by the teacher and supported by video recordings for further analysis. The content validity of the instrument is reviewed by subject teachers, and the reliability is tested with Pearson's Bivariate Correlation using IBM SPSS Statistics software.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation), normality test (Shapiro-Wilk), and hypothesis test (Paired Sample t-Test) to compare pre-test and post-test scores. Analysis was conducted using the latest version of IBM SPSS Statistics software. The success criteria are determined with a significance of $p < 0.05$, indicating a significant difference between the results before and after the treatment. The results of this analysis allow for an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of songs as a learning medium.

3.   Results and Discussion

This section presents the main findings of the research conducted on the effectiveness of using the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County in improving asking and giving opinion skills among 24 eleventh-grade students at SMA Istiqomah Bandung. The research results were obtained through quantitative data analysis, including pre-test and post-test scores, as well as statistical testing to determine the significance of the students' skill improvement.

Descriptive Statistics

To determine the general trends in student learning outcomes before and after the treatment, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted. This statistic presents data in the form of numerical measures such as minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. This analysis is useful for providing a general overview of students' achievement levels quantitatively and for observing the extent of the value distribution obtained by the students. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the students' pre-test and post-test scores are presented in the table 1:

Tabel 1 Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Post-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	24	57	69	64.17	2.988
Posttest	24	78	91	85.04	3.407
Valid N (listwise)	24				

The table above presents descriptive statistics from the pre-test and post-test results participated by 24 students. In the pre-test, the minimum score obtained by the students was 57 and the maximum score was 69, with a mean of 64.17 and a standard deviation of 2.988. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the minimum score increased to 78 and the maximum score reached 91, with an average of 85.04 and a standard deviation of 3.407. This data shows an increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test, reflecting an improvement in students' abilities after the learning intervention. Additionally, the increase in standard deviation in the post-test indicates a slight increase in score variation among students compared to the pre-test.

Frequency and Percentage Data

To obtain a more detailed picture of the distribution of student learning outcomes, a frequency and percentage analysis of pre-test and post-test scores was conducted. This analysis aims to categorize student scores into several assessment categories, such as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, and Very Poor. With this approach, researchers can see the extent of changes in students' skill mastery levels before and after the treatment is given. The frequency and percentage data of the pre-test results are presented in Table 2.

Tabel 2 Frequency and Percentage of Pretest and Post-test

Classification	Score Range	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	90–100	0	0.0%	2	8.3%
Very Good	80–89	0	0.0%	20	83.3%
Good	70–79	0	0.0%	2	8.3%
Fair	60–69	22	91.7%	0	0.0%
Poor	50–59	2	8.3%	0	0.0%
Very Poor	0–49	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total		24	100.0%	24	100.0%

The pretest results show that students' initial ability to express and respond to opinions in English is still low to moderate. This emphasizes the need for more engaging and effective interventions or learning methods, such as the use of song media implemented in this research. Meanwhile, the posttest results show that all students experienced a significant improvement in their abilities after using the song "Best Friend" as a learning medium. Not a single student remained in the low category (Fair and below), and the majority of students fell into the high category (Very Good and Excellent).

Normality Test

Before conducting the hypothesis test, a normality test must be performed to ensure that the data obtained from the pre-test and post-test are normally distributed. The normality test is important because the choice of statistical test—whether parametric or non-parametric—greatly depends on the assumption of data distribution. In this study, the normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk method, because the sample size was ($n < 50$). The results of the normality test on the pre-test and post-test data can be seen in the table 3:

Tabel 3 Normality Test of Pretest and Postest

| | **Tests of Normality** | | |
| | **Shapiro-Wilk** | | |
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Pretest	.933	24	.115
Posttest	.964	24	.526
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			

Based on the table above, the significance value (p-value) for the pretest data is 0.115 and for the posttest is 0.526. Both values are greater than the significance level of 0.05, so it can be concluded that both sets of data are normally distributed. Thus, the pretest and posttest data meet the assumption of normality. Therefore, the use of the parametric statistical test, namely the paired sample t-test, to test the hypothesis in this study is appropriate and methodologically justifiable.

Hypothesis Test

After it was determined that the pre-test and post-test data are normally distributed through the normality test, the next step is to conduct a hypothesis test to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two values. The test used is the Paired Sample t-Test, because the measurements are taken from the same group before and after the treatment. This test aims to examine the effectiveness of using the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County in improving students' speaking abilities, particularly in the skills of asking and giving opinions. The results of the hypothesis test can be seen in the table 4.

Tabel 4 Hypothesis Test of Pretest and Postest

Paired Samples t-Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-20.875	1.985	0.405	-21.713	-20.037	-51.520	23	<.001	<.001

To determine whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of students after being treated with the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County, a hypothesis test was conducted using the Paired Sample t-Test. This test is used because the data analyzed comes from two measurements on the same group, namely before and after the treatment. The hypothesis tested in this study is formulated as follows:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students after learning using the song "Best Friend." This means that the use of the song does not have a significant impact on students' ability in asking and giving opinion. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students after learning using the song "Best Friend." This means that the use of the song has a significant impact on improving students' ability in asking and giving opinion.

Based on the results of the statistical test using SPSS, a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of < 0.001 was obtained. This value is much smaller than the critical limit α = 0.05, so H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a highly significant difference between the pretest and posttest results. This means that the use of the song "Best Friend" by Rex Orange County as a learning medium is effective in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in expressing and responding to opinions in English.

Overall, these results indicate that all aspects of the students' English language proficiency have significantly improved after the implementation of the learning intervention. According to Vygotsky (1986: 189), the process of mediation or learning should ideally be directed towards abilities that students have not yet mastered independently, but can achieve through assistance or collaboration with others, as this is the area where their future developmental potential lies (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). This indicates that the teaching strategies or methods used have been effective in improving students' language skills, both in terms of comprehension and expressive oral abilities.

Discussion

Based on the results of the statistical test, there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after they participated in song-based learning. Thus, the null hypothesis (H$_0$), which states that there is no significant difference between the scores before and after the treatment, is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H$_1$) is accepted, indicating that learning through the song "Best Friend" is effective in improving students' ability to express and respond to opinions in English. The effectiveness of song media in language learning has been extensively studied. Songs provide authentic linguistic input and support students' emotional engagement in the learning process (Cores-Bilbao et al., 2019).The use of popular songs like "Best Friend" is also considered more contextual and relevant to the lives of teenagers, thereby increasing students' attention and retention of language material.

This study also aims to determine whether there is a significant improvement in students' abilities after the learning process. The data shows that all measured aspects of speaking skills have improved. This improvement shows that the song-based approach not only enhances overall ability but also has a positive impact on each component of speaking skills. This is in line with (Burns, 2019) findings, which state that speaking skills are a complex competence involving cognitive, social, and linguistic elements. Therefore, learning that provides a context of real communication, such as songs, can enhance students' fluency and meaningfulness of communication in the classroom. As Vygotsky stated regarding the concept of consciousness, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is structured as a concept to explain how the dynamic interaction between an individual and their environment can contribute to the developmental process (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008).

These findings support the research conducted by (Bsharat et al., 2021), which shows that songs can create an enjoyable learning environment and improve students' performance in English language learning. Furthermore, (Jannah & Ayu, 2022) concluded that songs as a learning medium help students increase their confidence in speaking and reduce anxiety when interacting in a foreign language. This study is also in line with the research by (Niswatun et al., 2022), which proved that practicing asking and giving opinion expressions can significantly improve students' speaking abilities. However, this research provides an additional contribution through a popular media-based approach that is packaged attractively and is relevant to the world of high school students. Unlike previous studies that were more general, this research focuses on the development of specific social language functions in authentic contexts through music media. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of the song "Best Friend" in the learning process not only enhances students' academic scores but also contributes to creating contextual, interactive, and affectively and linguistically relevant learning.

This study reinforces the findings of previous research such as that conducted by Bsharat et al. (2021), which showed that music can stimulate multiple senses and enhance learning motivation. A similar point was also made by Jannah & Ayu

(2022), that songs in English language learning increase students' interest and participation. However, the contribution of this research is more specific, as it focuses on the skills of asking and giving opinion—one of the most important forms of functional communication in social and academic life. This research also complements the findings of Niswatun et al. (2022), which proved that practicing functional expressions in asking and giving opinion can enhance students' abilities. However, this research offers a more effective approach by utilizing popular songs, thereby optimizing student engagement and achieving more uniform results.

The song "Best Friend" was chosen because it has easily understandable lyrics, is relatable to students' lives, and contains social expressions suitable for practicing asking and giving opinions. This supports the opinion of Cores-Bilbao et al. (2019), who state that music can create deep emotional engagement and motivate students in foreign language learning. Songs provide an authentic context, allowing students to understand the use of language in real situations. Additionally, this approach is also in line with Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of a pleasant learning atmosphere to reduce affective barriers in language learning. Interesting and familiar songs can create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, thereby increasing students' openness to new linguistic input.

This approach has practical implications for teachers in designing more contextual, communicative, and enjoyable learning activities. Songs can be used not only as listening media but also as discussion starters, dialogue practice materials, and sources of inspiration in expressing opinions. In this context, students not only learn the structure of the language but also learn to convey and understand ideas with confidence. Song-based activities also support student-centered learning, where students become more active and motivated. This is important considering that many Indonesian students still face obstacles in speaking English due to a lack of vocabulary, shyness, and limitations in pronunciation.

4. Conclusion

This research concludes that using the song *"Best Friend"* by Rex Orange County is an effective strategy to improve students' speaking skills, particularly in expressing and responding to opinions in English. The integration of music into the learning process successfully creates an enjoyable, relaxed, and interactive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to participate more actively in communication. Through the use of songs, students become more confident in expressing their opinions, using appropriate expressions, and responding naturally in English conversations.

The findings indicate that song-based learning not only helps students improve their linguistic competence, such as vocabulary mastery, pronunciation accuracy, grammatical usage, and fluency, but also enhances their affective engagement and motivation to learn. The lyrics of the song provide authentic examples of how opinions are expressed in real contexts, enabling students to understand the pragmatic use of language in everyday communication. This demonstrates that the

use of songs can effectively bridge theoretical understanding and practical application of language functions.

Furthermore, the implementation of the song *"Best Friend"* aligns with communicative and student-centered learning principles, as it encourages collaboration, creativity, and emotional involvement in learning. Students experience language not as a set of abstract rules but as a meaningful tool for expressing personal ideas and emotions. Consequently, the song serves as both a linguistic and emotional medium that fosters deeper comprehension and more natural language use.

In summary, the research proves that music-based learning, when integrated with functional language practice such as asking and giving opinions, can significantly contribute to students' overall speaking development. The use of the song *"Best Friend"* enhances the learning atmosphere, builds self-confidence, and supports meaningful communication. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate songs as part of their teaching strategies to make language learning more engaging, effective, and relevant to students' real-life experiences.

Acknowledgement

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