

EXPLORING EFL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION THROUGH MAHER ZAIN'S SONGS

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation is an important aspect of English learning because it helps students communicate clearly. However, many EFL students still face difficulties in pronunciation due to limited exposure to authentic English input. This study aimed to explore junior high school students' experiences in learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving eighth-grade students of SMP Plus Tahdzibun Nasyiin. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings revealed that students had positive learning experiences when learning pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs. The songs helped students improve pronunciation accuracy, stress, intonation, and confidence. However, students also faced challenges such as fast song tempo and unfamiliar vocabulary. This study concludes that Maher Zain's songs can be used as an effective medium for teaching pronunciation.

Keywords: *English songs, Maher Zain songs, Pronunciation, Students' Experiences*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation plays an important role in English communication because it helps learners deliver messages clearly and avoid misunderstanding (Ferdiyanto, 2019). Ideally, students are expected to pronounce English words accurately so they can communicate effectively in speaking activities. Good pronunciation also supports students' confidence in expressing ideas orally (Dewi & Ahmad, 2021). Therefore, pronunciation should receive sufficient attention in English language learning.

However, in reality, many EFL students still experience difficulties in pronunciation. They often struggle to pronounce English words correctly because of limited exposure to authentic pronunciation models. English learning in many classrooms still relies heavily on textbooks and teacher explanations rather than authentic listening materials (Tran et al., 2024). As a result, students have limited opportunities to practice natural English pronunciation.

This problem was also found at SMP Plus Tahdzibun Nasyiin. Based on preliminary observation, several students had difficulties pronouncing English words correctly and often felt bored during conventional pronunciation activities. Students rarely practiced pronunciation through engaging learning media. This condition shows a gap between the expected pronunciation competence and the actual classroom reality.

One alternative medium that can help solve this problem is English songs. Songs provide natural pronunciation models through repetition, rhythm, and melody, which can help students learn pronunciation in a more enjoyable way (Tolhairi, 2023). Songs also reduce students' anxiety and increase learning motivation (Mariska et al., 2025). Among many English songs, Maher Zain songs were selected because they have clear pronunciation, meaningful lyrics, and are suitable for junior high school students.

Previous studies have mostly focused on the effectiveness of songs in improving students' vocabulary, speaking ability, and general pronunciation achievement. However, limited studies specifically explore students' experiences in learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs, particularly at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL junior high school students' experiences in learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Pronunciation in EFL Learning

Pronunciation is one of the important components of speaking skills because it affects communication clarity (Prasad Tiwari, 2023). According to Tiwari, pronunciation helps learners produce understandable speech and avoid miscommunication during oral interaction. Pronunciation includes segmental features such as vowels and consonants as well as suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation (Fajriyyatul Husna, 2021). Students who have poor pronunciation may experience difficulties in delivering messages clearly even when they have sufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Many EFL learners still face difficulties in pronunciation due to the influence of their first language (Aeni et al., 2025). Indonesian students often transfer pronunciation patterns from their mother tongue into English

pronunciation, which may lead to pronunciation errors (Febiola et al., 2025). Therefore, students need appropriate learning media that can help them practice pronunciation more effectively.

Songs as Learning Media in Pronunciation Learning

Songs are considered effective learning media because they provide authentic language input for students (Tolhairi, 2023). Songs help students learn pronunciation through repetition, rhythm, and melody. Repetition in songs helps students remember pronunciation patterns more effectively and improves pronunciation accuracy (Saldıraner, 2021). Songs also create enjoyable learning environments that reduce students' anxiety and increase motivation during learning activities (Mariska et al., 2025).

In addition, songs expose students to natural pronunciation patterns, including stress and intonation. Through listening and imitation activities, students can become more familiar with authentic English pronunciation.

Previous Studies

Several previous studies have discussed the use of songs in English language learning. Songs have been shown to improve students' pronunciation achievement (Trisnawati Ega & Huda Choirul, 2025). Songs also contribute to the development of vocabulary mastery and speaking ability among EFL learners. However, most previous studies mainly focus on learning outcomes rather than students' experiences during the learning process.

Limited studies specifically explore students' experiences in learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain songs, particularly at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring students' experiences, benefits, and challenges in learning pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design (Furidha, 2023) to explore students' experiences in learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs. A qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions and learning experiences in a natural classroom setting (Nasution & Daulay, 2024).

The data sources of this study were eighth-grade students of SMP Plus Tahdzibun Nasyiin who had experienced learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. The data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine students' participation during pronunciation learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in

learning pronunciation (Fan, 2025). Documentation in the form of photographs taken during classroom activities was used to support the research data (Sari Sekar, 2025).

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Yusuf et al., 2022). To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation was applied by comparing data from observation, interviews, and documentation.

FINDING

This section presents the results of the research based on classroom observations, interviews, and documentation conducted during pronunciation learning activities through several Maher Zain songs. Classroom observations showed that students were actively involved in pronunciation activities, while interview data revealed students' experiences and challenges during the learning process. Documentation in the form of classroom photographs was used to support the findings. The findings were categorized into three major themes: students' positive learning experiences, students' pronunciation improvement, and challenges faced during the learning process.

Students' Positive Learning Experiences

Based on classroom observation, students appeared more enthusiastic during pronunciation activities compared to conventional learning methods. They actively listened to the songs, repeated lyrics, and participated in classroom pronunciation practice.

Student 1 stated:

"I feel happy and more excited to learn English pronunciation through songs."

Student 2 explained:

"Learning through songs is more enjoyable and not boring like only reading."

Student 3 shared:

"I like learning with songs because it feels fun and I can enjoy the music."

Student 4 stated:

"The classroom feels more relaxed when we learn pronunciation through songs."

Student 6 also explained that songs made English learning more interesting, while Student 8 mentioned that songs helped them stay focused during pronunciation practice.

These results indicate that song-based learning created a more enjoyable and engaging learning atmosphere for students.

Students' Pronunciation Improvement

Classroom observation showed that students gradually pronounced English words more clearly after repeating song lyrics several times. Some students also became more confident when practicing pronunciation in front of their classmates.

Student 1 stated:

“Listening repeatedly helps me pronounce words better.”

Student 5 explained:

“Songs help me imitate English pronunciation more easily.”

Student 7 mentioned:

“I understand stress and intonation better when learning through songs.”

Student 8 stated:

“I feel more confident when pronouncing English words now.”

Student 3 also shared:

“Repeating the song lyrics helps me remember the correct pronunciation.”

Student 6 explained that repeated listening helped them recognize correct pronunciation patterns more easily.

These findings indicate that Maher Zain’s songs helped students improve pronunciation accuracy, stress, intonation, and confidence.

Challenges Faced by Students

Although students had positive experiences, several challenges were also found during the learning process. Based on classroom observation, some students needed more time to repeat difficult words and follow the song lyrics.

Student 1 stated:

“Sometimes the song is too fast, so I cannot follow all the words.”

Student 7 shared a similar difficulty and admitted missing several words because of the song tempo.

Student 2 explained:

“Some vocabulary in the songs is unfamiliar for me.”

Student 4 mentioned:

“English spelling and pronunciation are sometimes confusing.”

Student 8 stated:

“I feel embarrassed when I pronounce words incorrectly.”

Student 5 explained that some words were difficult to imitate correctly, while Student 6 admitted needing repeated practice to pronounce certain words accurately.

These findings indicate that students still faced pronunciation challenges, although they continued participating actively during the learning process.

DISCUSSION

The first finding revealed that students had positive learning experiences when learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain’s songs. Most students

reported feeling happy, relaxed, and more motivated during pronunciation activities. Classroom observation also showed that students participated more actively compared to conventional learning methods. This finding is similar to Mariska et al. (2025), who found that songs create enjoyable learning environments and increase students' motivation in learning English. Trisnawati and Huda (2023) also found that songs help students become more engaged during language learning activities. These findings indicate that songs can create positive learning experiences for students.

The second finding showed that Maher Zain's songs helped students improve pronunciation accuracy, stress, intonation, and confidence. Students explained that repeated listening activities helped them remember correct pronunciation and imitate English sounds more easily. This finding supports Tolhairi (2023), who explained that songs improve pronunciation through repetition and authentic language exposure. Similarly, Saldıraner (2022) found that repetition in songs helps students memorize pronunciation patterns more effectively. These findings show that songs can be effective tools for improving students' pronunciation skills.

The third finding revealed that students still faced several challenges during pronunciation learning through songs. Some students experienced difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, following fast song tempo, and differentiating English spelling from pronunciation. This finding is consistent with Aeni et al. (2025) and Febiola et al. (2025), who found that EFL learners often experience pronunciation difficulties due to first language interference and limited exposure to English pronunciation. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on the benefits of songs, this study also revealed practical challenges experienced by students during song-based pronunciation learning.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that Maher Zain's songs can be effective media for teaching English pronunciation. The findings support previous studies while also providing additional insights into students' real experiences in learning pronunciation through songs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that EFL junior high school students experienced learning English pronunciation through Maher Zain's songs as an engaging and meaningful learning process. The use of songs supported students in developing their pronunciation skills, particularly in terms of accuracy, stress, intonation, and confidence in speaking English. Overall, Maher Zain's songs proved to be an effective alternative medium in pronunciation learning at the junior high school level.

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