

## THE EFFECT OF USING SONG TO THE STUDENTS' MASTERY OF PRESENT TENSE

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### ABSTRACT

The low mastery of grammar, especially Present Tense, and low learning motivation are the background of this study, where seventh grade students of SMP Nurul Islam consider grammar as a difficult and boring material. The focus of this study is to test the effectiveness of using song media as an innovative strategy to improve students' mastery of Present Tense. As an important step, this study uses the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method which is implemented in two cycles on 32 students. Each cycle includes the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection, with data collection through pre-test, post-test, observation sheets, and questionnaires. The main findings show a significant improvement in student learning outcomes. The average student score increased from 7.1 in the pre-test to 8.8 in the post-test of the second cycle, with 100% of students successfully achieving the completion criteria. In addition, the use of songs successfully created a more enjoyable learning atmosphere and increased student active participation. In conclusion, the use of song media has proven to be an effective strategy in improving students' mastery of Present Tense, both from the cognitive and affective aspects.

**Keywords:** *Grammar, Present Tense, Song*

### ABSTRAK

Rendahnya penguasaan tata bahasa, khususnya *Present Tense*, serta motivasi belajar yang rendah menjadi latar belakang penelitian ini, di mana siswa kelas VII SMP Nurul Islam menganggap grammar sebagai materi yang sulit dan membosankan. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji efektivitas penggunaan media lagu sebagai strategi inovatif untuk meningkatkan penguasaan *Present Tense* siswa. Sebagai langkah penting, penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus pada 32 siswa. Setiap siklus mencakup tahapan perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi, dengan pengumpulan data melalui *pre-test*, *post-test*, lembar observasi, dan kuesioner. Temuan utama menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada hasil belajar siswa. Nilai rata-rata siswa meningkat dari 7,1 pada *pre-test* menjadi 8,8 pada *post-test* siklus kedua, dengan 100% siswa berhasil mencapai kriteria ketuntasan. Selain itu, penggunaan lagu berhasil menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih menyenangkan dan meningkatkan partisipasi aktif siswa. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan media lagu terbukti menjadi strategi yang efektif dalam meningkatkan penguasaan *Present Tense* siswa, baik dari aspek kognitif maupun afektif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Grammar, Present Tense, Lagu*

### INTRODUCTION

Grammar serves as the structural foundation of any language, providing the essential rules that govern how words can be modified and combined to convey precise meaning.1 As Harmer (2001) explains, grammar is the description of how words can change their forms and be arranged into coherent sentences. A strong grasp of these grammatical principles is indispensable for effective communication, as even minor changes in form can significantly

alter the intended message. This view is reinforced by Cameron (2001), who posits that language learning is fundamentally the accumulation of mastered grammatical rules. Without a solid understanding of grammar, learners will struggle to comprehend the relationships between words and sentences, ultimately failing to achieve true fluency. Therefore, developing grammatical competence is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial step toward mastering a language for meaningful interaction.

Ideally, the process of learning grammar should be an engaging and empowering experience for students, equipping them with the confidence to use the language accurately. In an effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, grammar is not taught as a set of abstract, isolated rules but is integrated into meaningful communicative contexts.<sup>2</sup> The ideal learning environment encourages students to see grammar as a tool for expressing themselves more clearly and effectively. Instruction should be interactive, contextualized, and designed to foster a positive attitude towards learning. When students understand the practical value of grammar and are actively involved in the learning process, they are more likely to develop both accuracy and fluency, viewing grammar as a key that unlocks richer communication possibilities (Isnata, 2025; Synekop et al., 2024).

However, the reality in many EFL classrooms presents a stark contrast to this ideal. Based on pre-observation conducted during the 2024/2025 academic year at the seventh-grade level of SMP Nurul Islam, a significant gap was identified between the importance of grammar and students' ability and willingness to learn it. Many students perceive grammar, particularly complex topics like the Present Tense, as exceedingly difficult and boring. This negative perception manifests as a lack of motivation, confusion during lessons, and a general disengagement from the learning process. Students often struggle to select appropriate verb forms or use tenses correctly in sentences, reinforcing their belief that grammar is an insurmountable obstacle rather than a helpful tool (Miguel, 2021; Valera, 2024). This challenge is compounded by traditional teaching methods that frequently fail to contextualize grammar, leading to fragmented understanding and a stifling of creativity (Meng & Zhu, 2023).

This disengagement creates a challenging classroom dynamic where students are not receptive to traditional teaching methods. The preconceived notion that grammar is inherently dull leads to a passive learning environment, where students are reluctant to participate and their attention wanes. This psychological barrier significantly hinders their ability to absorb and apply grammatical rules. The core problem, therefore, is not just a lack of understanding but a lack of motivation rooted in unengaging pedagogical approaches. To overcome this, it is imperative for educators to move beyond conventional, drill-based methods and adopt innovative strategies that can transform students' negative attitudes and make the process of learning grammar both enjoyable and effective (Kiely, 2017; Meng & Zhu, 2023; Syafryadin, 2021).

To address this challenge, this research proposes the integration of an authentic and highly motivating medium into grammar instruction: English songs. Using songs in the language classroom provides a powerful alternative to traditional methods by embedding grammatical structures within a context that is culturally relevant and emotionally resonant for young learners.<sup>3</sup> Songs offer a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere that can reduce learning anxiety and increase student participation.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, they provide rich, authentic language input, allowing students to hear grammatical patterns used naturally. This approach shifts the focus from rote memorization to meaningful engagement, leveraging the power of music to make abstract grammar rules more concrete and memorable.

The pedagogical benefits of using songs are multifaceted. As noted by Saricoban and Metin (2000), songs serve as a source of authentic and meaningful material that can

significantly enhance the language learning experience. They can be strategically used to highlight common grammatical errors, stimulate discussions about feelings and ideas, and encourage creativity. For instance, the repetitive nature of lyrics provides multiple exposures to target structures like the Present Tense, aiding retention and automaticity. This methodology is supported by previous research, such as the study by Aprilliasari (2020), which demonstrated that using songs was a conducive and effective method for teaching the Simple Present Tense to seventh-grade students, affirming the potential of this innovative approach.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using English songs as a pedagogical tool to improve the mastery of the Present Tense among seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Islam. The research will explore how this innovative approach can address the prevalent issues of low motivation and engagement in grammar learning. By implementing a teaching strategy centered on music, this study seeks to determine if this method can not only enhance students' grammatical accuracy but also foster a more positive and enthusiastic attitude towards learning English grammar. The ultimate goal is to provide empirical evidence for a joyful and effective teaching practice that can be adopted by other educators facing similar challenges.

## **METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

Classroom Action Research is defined as an observation of learning process such as action which is arise in the class (Arikunto 2006). It implies that the action is given by the teacher. Then, students do the instruction given by the teacher, so that the teacher can observe their learning process. In classroom action research, we observe the learning process. This research is conducted to check whether songs are able to increase students' mastery of Present Tense. Hence, the researchers used the design of pre-test and post-test for the research. It means that before the first teaching pre-test is carried out, and after the second meeting a post-test is conducted. The researchers also conducted a try out test to measure the level of test clarification which can be categorized into difficult, medium or easy. This was done before pre-test and post-test. The researchers were helped by one of English teachers. He was as the collaborator who assists in giving direction during research.

Researchers applied two cycles. One cycle consists of phase of planning, action, observation and reflection. Cycle two is done by the researchers if cycle one does not show significant. The population is the students at the second year of SMP Nurul Islam. They consist of 2 classes. The writers chose VIIIa as the sample. Subject is 32 students with 10 males and 22 females. The writers chose that class because they have problem in gramar, especially in mastering Present Tense. Test, observation sheet and questionnaire were used in collecting the data. Test consists of pre-test and post test. Each teast contains 25 items. They are multiple choice with four options of answer (A, B, C, and D). The test is certainly about Present Tense. Observation is used to carry out while teaching learning process whether is still in progress in order to see students' interest and problem find in using song. Questionnaire was used by the writer as instrument to look for the students' argument when they do the process of learning whether they were happy and enjoy through it.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This part will describe about the result of the research in which the data were taken through test; pre-test and post-test for each cycle, observation, and questionnaire. It also gives the discussion about the result in related to certain theory as the background.

## Result

By having the treatments through the two cycles, there were some findings showing that songs could improve students' mastery of Present Tense. It could be seen from the result of the whole test. In pre-test, the lowest score was 3.6 and the highest score was 9.2 (one student). The average score of pre-test was 7.1. Meanwhile, from the post-test, the lowest was 5.2 and the highest score was 9,2 (more than one student) and the average score of post test cycle 1 was 7.4. The comparing score from these data can be seen an increase of the average score between pre-test and post-test in cycle 1 was 0.3. So, the average score in cycle 1 increased 7.1 of pre-test to 7.4 of post-test. It showed that there had been an increase although it could not be said that the success had not been gained yet since only 62,5% of students who got score more than 7. It did not fulfill the target  $\geq 75\%$  of students get 7 for their test result. Besides, through an intensive treatment, there was significantly increase.

Post-test result in cycle1, the highest score was 10 and the lowest score was 7.2. Then, the average score was 8.8. Thus, the average score in cycle 1 increased from 7.4 in cycle 2 to 8.8. The increase was 1.4. Compared the data, it can be seen the increase of the average score between pre-test and post-test in cycle 2 is 1.4. In general, the average of test result from cycle 1 to cycle 2 increased gradually. Students' number who got score more than 7 had reached 100%. It means that the success had fulfilled the criteria. Thus, the average score in post test cycle 2 increased; 7.1 in pre-test to 8.8 in post-test. The increased was 1.7 and that was a very significant finding about increase of students' mastery of Present Tense. The illustration can be seen in the Figure 1.

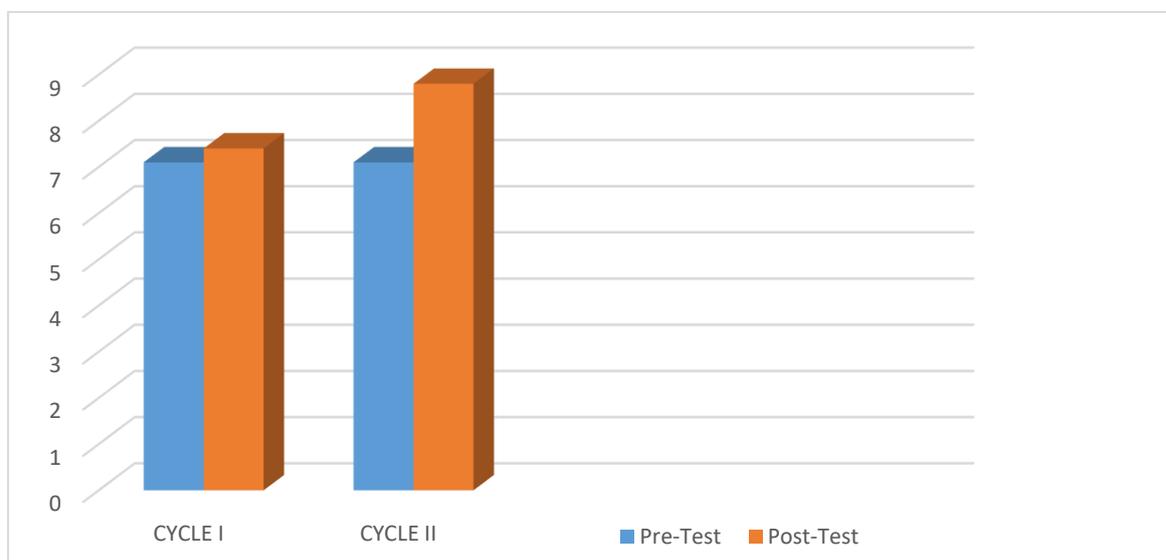


Figure 1. Score of Present Tense Mastery in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

## Discussion

In the process of teaching grammar, a teacher is required to be more active and creative enough to help students avoid feeling bored. Consequently, it is hoped that no more students will perceive grammar as a difficult subject. Songs can be a highly suitable alternative medium for use in the English classroom due to their engaging nature. In this method, besides being given a fill-in-the-blank lyric exercise, students are also given the opportunity to check their friends' work. This can foster a collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere. The use of songs shifts the learning paradigm from passive to more participatory, helping students

understand grammatical rules in an authentic and enjoyable context, thereby reducing their anxiety about complex material (Rosfiani et al., 2025; Zuhijra et al., 2024).

Observation was conducted when the researchers introduced a song in the teaching of the Present Tense. A brief description of the song was provided beforehand to build context. Then, the researchers distributed the song lyrics and asked students to fill in the blank spaces using the correct Present Tense form. A short explanation of the rules for using the Present Tense was also given to aid student comprehension. Although some students were initially inattentive, talking with friends, and appeared sleepy, the researchers continued the process by explaining the material more slowly and clearly. To address this issue, the researchers occasionally walked around the classroom to ensure student attention. This adaptive approach demonstrates the importance of teacher responsiveness in managing classroom dynamics, even when using an engaging medium (Maelissa et al., 2024; Salam et al., 2025).

After the teaching process of the Present Tense using the song was completed, the data obtained showed very positive results. There was a significant increase in the students' mastery of the Present Tense. Furthermore, the students also showed high enthusiasm during the teaching and learning process. They became more active in responding to questions posed by the teacher as well as other students, creating a lively and participatory classroom atmosphere. Evidence of their understanding was clear from their ability to distinguish the use of the base form of the verb (verb to-) and the verb with the -s/es suffix (Verb+s/es). This positive change in student attitude and participation served as an indicator of the method's success, equally as important as the improvement in their academic scores.

These findings are in line with the views of experts. Saricoban & Metin (2000) add that the use of English songs in EFL classrooms can provide authentic and meaningful material, offering advantages for both teachers and learners. Additionally, Andilah et al. (2025:170) claim that the use of media as a learning strategy provides significant benefits in increasing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. The application of songs as a medium in grammar learning proved to be very helpful. Besides yielding a significant increase in student achievement in the Present Tense, songs as a medium also helped students become much more enthusiastic. Finally, it can be concluded that the use of songs was proven effective in improving students' understanding of grammar, particularly concerning the Present Tense (Permana et al., 2025; Rosfiani et al., 2025; Sembiring et al., 2025).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the research data, it can be definitively concluded that the implementation of songs as a pedagogical tool significantly enhances students' mastery of the Present Tense. This conclusion is strongly supported by several key findings. Firstly, the academic improvement was remarkable, as evidenced by the post-test results of the second cycle, where 100% of students achieved scores surpassing the school's minimum competency standard (KKM). This demonstrates that students were not merely memorizing rules but were able to apply the grammatical patterns in a meaningful context. Secondly, the use of songs successfully cultivated a conducive, joyful, and creative learning atmosphere. This positive environment was instrumental in boosting students' moods and encouraging them to participate actively in classroom activities. Lastly, the method promoted deeper knowledge retention, as the process of self-discovery through analyzing lyrics allows information to be stored more permanently in students' minds compared to passive reception from traditional sources.

Considering these positive outcomes, this study offers important implications for both educators and future researchers. Teachers are strongly encouraged to incorporate various

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teaching aids, including songs, into their classroom practices. By doing so, they can effectively increase student motivation and eagerness to learn English grammar, particularly complex topics like the Present Tense, transforming a potentially tedious subject into an engaging experience. For future research, it is recommended that investigators explore the potential of different musical genres. For instance, acoustic music, with its typically clear vocals and simpler arrangements, could be an excellent medium for teaching other grammatical tenses or structures. By systematically varying the media to suit the learning material, future studies can continue to refine this creative approach, aiming to produce even more excellent student abilities and contributing valuable insights into effective language pedagogy.

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