

Effects of Song Inclusion on Vocabulary Learning and Mastery: A Case Study of the Affective Filter in Higher Education Students

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Abstract

Song inclusion in language pedagogy has mainly been treated as a classical, but also functional approach to listening practice and pronunciation activities. In an effort to address previous research gaps in different learning contexts, this study examines undergraduate EFL learners' perspectives on song inclusion via vocabulary learning and mastery in a Thai higher education setting. Of great significance is the role of affective filters in vocabulary development and constructive learning motivation. Based on quantitative and qualitative data analyses, 120 Thai undergraduates from a public university were selected as research participants. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to reflect the percentages, standard deviations, and mean scores. A semi-structured interview was also designed to bring further viewpoints on in-class and external classroom engagement. During the learning sessions, twelve selected songs were applied in classes, except for the periods of the pretest, posttest, midterm, and final examination. The findings exhibit positive effects of song inclusion on vocabulary learning and improvement, as reflected in the pretest and posttest outcomes. In addition, extensive results highlight beneficial impacts of song inclusion on vocabulary retention, a more relaxing and enthusiastic learning experience, and positive motivation under low affective filter conditions. Specifically in higher education contexts, the recent study provides insights and highlights the roles of English song inclusion in language pedagogy, with further contributions on attentive learning experience, communicative interactions, and resourceful inputs for language and intercultural studies.

Keywords: song inclusion, vocabulary learning, affective filters, higher education context, students' perceptions

1. Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is vital to language competence for both receptive and productive skills. With adequate vocabulary resources, students are more effectively able to acquire and command extensive skills in daily English communication (Faliyanti, 2017).

In Thai and particularly EFL contexts, challenges have been reflected in numerous impeding issues ranging from inadequate proficiency in linguistic mechanisms, first language interference, subject-verb agreement and grammatical difficulties, poor listening ability and oral fluency barriers, and more importantly, limited vocabulary repertoire (Bennui, 2008; Biyaem, 1997; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025; Rattanalert et al., 2023). Insufficient vocabulary also causes difficulties in mastering appropriate word choices and communicative meanings (Nurnaningsih, 2022).

Communication anxiety and affective filters' influence further magnify challenges and interferences in vocabulary learning and maneuverability. According to Daly's concept (1991), communicative and linguistic apprehension exacerbate hindrances through fear, anxiety, and discomfort, thus imposing a burden on foreign language learning on one hand and communicative language use on the other. With affective filters, emotionally non-linguistic factors intensify a state of low confidence, uncomfortable feelings, anxiety, boredom, and stress (Krashen, 1983).

To ameliorate affective barriers, a growing literature has been proposed with song inclusion in language pedagogical contexts. This might be due to the expectation that songs contain rhythmically attractive characteristics with enriched meaning of simple day-to-day language (Luo et al., 2022). Along with this inclusion, previous literature also identifies problems concerning less motivated, pressurized learning environments, including negative, depressed perceptions of language learners throughout old-school pedagogical lines (Batluk, 2015; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025; Nety, 2022; Phanarangsarn, 2000; Pancharoen, 2005; Schoepp, 2001; Rattanalert et al., 2023). In terms of vocabulary, affective challenges are associated with deficits in word retention and mastery, with decreasing motivation to pursue vocabulary learning and practice (Faisal & Putri, 2023; Faliyanti, 2017; Gasuvarn & Jhanphoj, 2013; Karim et al., 2022; Malekian, 2016). These issues render Krashen's concept (1982) of the affective filter outstanding. With this tendency, the less effective the filter, the more the opportunity for students to learn and acquire language. Despite this, few studies have examined songs inclusion for EFL learners within Thai tertiary contexts, specifically on vocabulary learning and mastery. Such a research gap is the core focus of the current research.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain undergraduates' perspectives and the roles of song inclusion on vocabulary improvement and retention with a motivational impact on language

learning and acquisition in the Thai setting. Based on historical overview, former studies have emphasized the influences of English music in kindergarten, primary, and secondary education. Furthermore, a window of opportunity goes with extensive implementation of song use in different classroom contexts and cultures (Suriyatham, 2015). The current study provides more practical engagement to fulfill preceding gaps in higher education contexts. Broader contributions shed light on mastery and motivational perspectives in relation to affective matters that strengthen constructive learning themes and support for vocabulary and linguistic development.

2. Affiliated Theories

2.1 Vocabulary Matters

Vocabulary is of great significance in studying and implementing language in daily use (Laufer, 1997). In this process, teaching vocabulary has become a principal and fundamental element since all languages are based on words prior to grammatical and communicative sentences (Faliyanti, 2017).

From previous studies, it has been supported that large and diverse vocabulary repertoires accommodate language learners in terms of both language learning and acquisition. In Limbong's research (2012), a larger vocabulary repertoire has facilitated learners' understanding as an input factor and learners' speaking skills as an output product. In line with Richards and Ranandya's pedagogical approaches, there has been solid evidence that a larger amount of vocabulary promotes learners' communication and mastery. Richards and Ranandya (2002) have proposed that students' communicative ability in reading, listening, speaking, and writing has been governed by their vocabulary mastery. However, the repertoires must be larger and broader in both quantity and quality to achieve effective communication (Suryanto et al., 2021).

In this regard, an extensive quantity of vocabulary assists semantic matters and communication mastery, while a broader knowledge of word choices and repertoire enriches the qualitative features of language use in appropriate communication contexts.

2.2 Learning Difficulties as Imposed by the Affective Filter Phenomena

Considering the acquisition of a second language, the affective filter appears to be one of the noteworthy matters within the process and the final product itself. Dating back, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was delineated as a subdimension of the systematic study of language. Along the same line as this concept is "interlanguage", a substantial concept for studying L2 acquisition (Selinker, 1972). Variations of discussion have ranged from linguistic phenomena to psychological and contextual dimensions. It is noteworthy that an intertwined relationship

exists between the input and the affective filter hypotheses introduced by Krashen's framework (1982).

The affective filter hypothesis can be described as involving contexts with emotional and constructive states that facilitate linguistic acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Simply put, there is a great possibility that the target language is successfully achieved under less pressure, positive input, and relaxed conditions. Such a phenomenon has been recognized as a low affective filter setting. On the contrary, high affective filter environments, as mirrored through stressful conditions with high pressure in learning situations, tend to impose negative impacts on language use and acquisition, thus barricading language learning and pedagogy. This concept corresponds to what Spada and Lightbown (1999, p. 39) illustrated in their work: "... the filter limits what is noticed and what is acquired."

Many research studies address the crucial roles of affective filters in both pedagogical and educational journeys. With challenging perceptions and intricate features of English as believed by foreign language learners, high-affective filters have burdened opportunities with stress, anxiety, and an arduous mindset to pursue language learning and acquisition (Biyaem, 1997; Dewaele, 2019; Wiriyachitra, 2002). Language acquisition including positive attitude with motivation and confidence in communication towards English are less likely to be attained and fulfilled, once affective filter becomes stronger (Fortuna, 2025; Getie, 2020; Gong et al., 2023).

2.3 The Phenomena of Songs in English Curriculum and Pedagogy

Song inclusion in English pedagogical design and learning activities inclines to be few and far between in a tertiary setting when compared to primary and secondary education. In the works of Khan (2024) and Zhang et al. (2023), empirical studies in an ESL context have shown that songs develop speaking performance, auditory skill, and vocabulary enlargement of language learners. According to Bokiev and Ismail (2021), song inclusion in second language pedagogy conveys positive beliefs and perceptions among Malaysian teachers in terms of principles. However, time constraints, personnel workload, classroom sizes, songs' selection criteria, action guidelines, and proper facilities have become challenging variables in practices.

Richards and Ranandya (2002) argued that English songs can be treated as one of the most supportive, integrative strategies that provide more scope for integration with other affiliated methods. For example, the use of songs can promote attentive learning, vocabulary, grammatical structure, pronunciation, and the sentimental touch of emotion depicted through accents, pitch, rhymes, and lyrics (Boothe and West, 2015). In addition, this media type can facilitate language learning by lessening the level of affective filters and by increasing cognitive processing and automaticity as a key element of language fluency (Domoney & Harris, 1993;

Eken, 1996; Gattbonton & Segalowitz, 1988). Moreover, Salcedo (2002) supported the use of songs in foreign language pedagogy with practical benefits for word retention and as a resourceful database. In line with Bawawa's study (2020), English music can be employed as a practical strategy in word learning and development under relaxing circumstances since it stimulates active practice, word mnemonics, joyful learning experiences, and word choice mastery. Nevertheless, previous investigations have insufficiently pinpointed Thai EFL higher education contexts under the circumstances of different linguistic performances.

Explicitly in vocabulary improvement, Kusnierek's study (2016) prioritizes the attractive features of songs in amplifying vocabulary repertoires and variations. The study explicated the advantageous implementation of English music towards constructive attitudes and enhanced learning motivation towards music contents, favorite singers, or even the language itself. Malekian (2016) has outlined that English songs facilitate language learning in three facets. Firstly, it deals with psychological implications, also known as cognitive processes in the human brain. Listening to English songs is of great significance in fostering linguistic proficiency by means of melodies, rhythms, phonology, syntax, semantics, and meaningful forms of sound. Secondly, songs encourage a positive learning atmosphere with a low affective filter, thereby stimulating a constructive environment for pleasant learning and language acquisition. Thirdly, songs become a source of motivation in language teaching and learning via an active, persuasive, and amusing experience.

With theoretical contributions from affiliated literatures on the phenomena of song inclusivity, the present study proposes songs' potential roles in vocabulary mnemonics, reduced affective constraints, and enhanced motivation.

2.4 Previous Research Studies

Previous research studies in both international and local settings have scrutinized numerous angles of song inclusion in linguistic activities and pedagogies. This section explores and discusses other relevant matters in the research with findings on the use of English music in English pedagogy and as a foreign language.

The use of songs in the adult ESL classroom demonstrates advantages in fostering language improvement and acquisition with constructive results for a low affective filter environment (Boothe & West, 2015; Khan, 2024; Luo et al., 2022; Richards & Ranandya, 2002; Zhang et al., 2023). Aside from integrative English skill development, involving songs in the studying process can endorse learners with cultural knowledge valued by other nations and communities (Lems, 2001). On this matter, students are inclined to gain valuable content

about cultural diversity and difference in parallel with language study. From an instructors' perspective, optimistic attitudes and perceptions are appraised by ESL teachers underpinning song inclusivity in classroom practices (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Tegge, 2018; Tse, 2015). Nonetheless, most teachers reflect challenges in aspects of time constraint, limited resources in selection, heavy workloads, large classes, and inadequate facilities. In return, suggested guidelines have been made on inclusive practices and useful considerations ranging from music pace and pitch, learners' age and proficiency, vocabulary complexity and cultural values (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Ludke, 2009; Poppleton, 2001; Tasnim, 2022). These guidelines tend to be broad and mostly occur in school environments.

In specific terms of vocabulary and the EFL arena, fruitful research findings demonstrate positive effects of song inclusivity in advancing vocabulary knowledge, active retention, listening comprehension, speaking capability, motivation, and word mastery (Faisal & Putri, 2023; Karim et al., 2022; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025; Phanarangsarn, 2000; Puncharoen, 2005; Rattanalert et al., 2023). Especially interesting is that English music can be modified as a prominent resource for individual learning outside the classroom and extracurricular setting (Domoney & Harris, 1993; Hanlan, 2008). From both mentioned studies, students spend leisure time to additionally pursue vocabulary learning, with creative discussion among their classmates and family in order to improve their comprehension of lyrics and embedded meanings. In language mechanisms, songs can be employed to simplify grammatical features and sentence structures in motivational and innovative ways (Malekian, 2016). The aforementioned results support Suwanarak's contemporary study (2015). Thai adult language learners apply music as their language learning strategy to comprehend and acquire the target language. This might be due to the repetitive characteristic of songs and their relaxing nature.

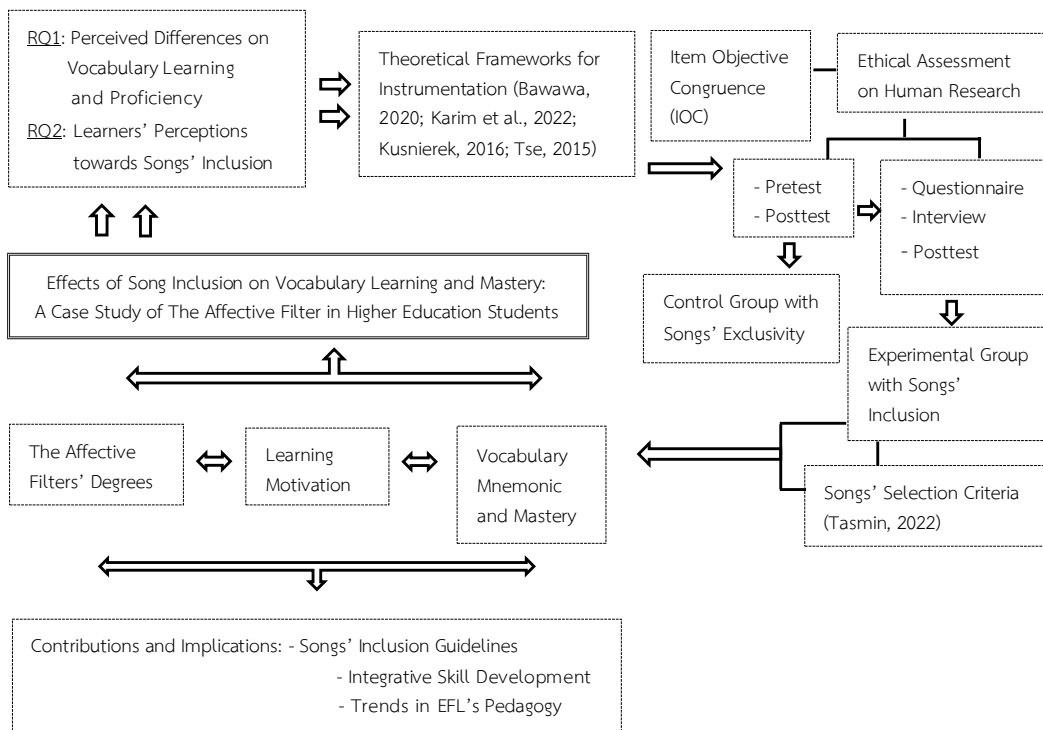
With the current research parameters, the aims of this paper are to ascertain undergraduate students' perspectives and to illuminate the role of song inclusivity in vocabulary improvement and word retention, embracing a motivational feature in view of the Thai context, Rajabhat Rajanagarindra University. To complete previous gaps, this article proceeds based on the purposes with the research questions defined as follows:

- 1) What are the perceived differences in students' vocabulary learning and proficiency as proposed by song inclusion in English pedagogy? and
- 2) What are students' perceptions towards song engagement in the assigned English courses?

3. Research Methodology

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



3.1 Instrumentation

The conceptual framework for this study is demonstrated in Figure 1. The instruments included four measurable tools: a pretest, a posttest, a structured questionnaire, and an interview. Adapted from Bawawa's study (2020) with the interest of research purposes and comprehensive applicability, the pretest was designed to measure former students' vocabulary knowledge in both control and experimental groups prior to the inclusion of songs in language pedagogy. Research samples were invited to complete a 20-item pretest regarding their vocabulary knowledge, by matching words with the correct definitions. The posttest design was employed to measure perceived differences in proficiency and learning improvement on vocabulary in comparison with the pretest and between control and experimental groups. With the same

set of vocabulary as the pretest, the 20-item multiple choice posttest was randomly administered in switching order to avoid test effects.

A structured questionnaire was also implemented to assess the proposed research questions. This instrumentation was contextually adjusted from Tse's study (2015) alongside Kusnierek's implication (2016), Bawawa's academic work (2020), and the study of vocabulary mastery and enhancement conducted by Karim et al. (2022). This literature was considered to be practical for this research area with respect to instrumentation, analytical framework, and EFL contextual implications. The Google Form formatted survey was administered in two sections. The former included respondents' demographic information, whereas the latter measured prospective attitudes and perceptions towards music inclusivity in vocabulary learning and instructional activity. There were fifteen items included in the questionnaire: the first five items measured perceptions toward word mnemonics and retention, the second five items explored learners' motivation, and the last five items investigated the affective filter's influence. A quantitative analysis was conducted via a five-point Likert-type scale. The degree of measurement ranged from Level 1 (*strongly disagree*) to Level 5 (*strongly agree*).

With the semi-structured interview, three questions were proposed to examine subjective attitudes and opinions regarding songs' effects as perceived in detail by the learners. Further suggested ideas arising from this method were expected to inform future implementation and research development.

Along these lines, content validity was established by the process of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). Three experts in research instruments and language teaching were invited to conduct the IOC evaluation. The range of selection criteria ranged from 0.50-1.00. The experts' assessments yielded values of 0.90 for the pretest and the posttest, 0.84 for the questionnaire, and 1.00 for the interview questions. In this study, ethical approval was obtained to ensure human care and dignity, including safety and well-being. This approval was granted by the ethics committee of Rajabhat Rajanagarindra University's Institutional Review Board (COA No. 009/2567, RRU-IRB No. 004/2567). The principles of consideration consisted of three crucial factors: respect for persons, beneficence, including non-maleficence, and justice.

The selection of English songs was based on the criteria of age, proficiency levels, learners' preferences, socio-cultural trends, speed and length, and word complexity (Tasnim, 2022). Language clarity and culturally appropriate content were also considered to assist learners' attention, comprehension, and motivation (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021). Given these outlines, twelve English songs released during the 21st century were chosen under a pop culture theme. Featuring themes of love, friendship, commitment, amusement, and adolescent

aspirations, the selected songs were categorized into romantic, sentimental, and joyful genres. This selection is in accordance with Baoan's design (2008) since pop songs appeal to motivational, cultural, and emotional themes. Examples of songs are as follows: 'You' by Tara MacLean (2002), 'A Thousand Years' by Christina Perri (2011), and 'A Whole New World' by Mena Massoud featuring Naomi Scott (2019).

3.2 Research Participants

With the focused research boundary, one hundred and twenty RRU's undergraduates registered in three assigned courses (English for Communication, English for Career, and English Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes) were recruited as research participants. These courses represented different degrees of vocabulary complexity and levels of content difficulty, ranging from a basic class for first-year students to an advanced course for senior-year students. A purposive sampling method was adopted to ensure the most pertinent and reliable data for the analysis. Inclusion criteria consisted of considerations such as assorted linguistic proficiencies, EFL instructional setting, a moderate classroom size, a regular program, and a specific academic semester. In terms of gender, most research participants were female, followed by male and unspecified status, accounting for 65.80%, 30.80%, and 3.40%, respectively. The typical ages were around eighteen to twenty years.

For the educational background, the students were studying in the following programs: English Major (34.60%), Chinese Teaching (16.90%), Political Sciences (16.90%), Computer Sciences (16.90%), and Education (14.70%). This demographic information supports the current research design in terms of different linguistic proficiency and diverse background knowledge in vocabulary (Biyaem, 1997; Wiriyaichitra, 2002).

An experimental group and a control group were randomly assigned. The first group contained sixty learners in a music engagement condition. The second group encompassed sixty students without music-based activities.

Given the environment of RRU's English learning, the classes comprised twenty students per learning section in the regular program. Hence, the researchers collected data from two to three class sections to ensure an appropriate sample size and diversity of linguistic proficiencies within and among groups.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The duration of data collection occurred during the second semester of the academic year 2024 (November 2024 to March 2025). The collection procedure is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Data collection procedure

Procedures	Control Group	Experimental Group
1. The Pretest	- At the beginning of the courses	- At the beginning of the courses
2. Song Treatment	- General approaches without song inclusivity	- Song treatment applied from the second to the last learning session - Time duration per session: 25 minutes. - Four-time engagement per learning session: (1) prelude (songs only without lyrics), (2) interlude (playing songs twice with lyric cloze tests), and (3) postlude (songs with lyric cloze tests played with English subtitles) - Contents involving grammar, idioms, and cultural issues also provided if possible
3. The Posttest	- At the final learning session	- At the final learning session
4. The Questionnaire	-	- Presented in Thai - Distributed to the respondents via a Google-virtual online format - Implementation procedure based on Ethics in Human Research
5. The Interview	-	- Fifteen interviewees randomly assigned for data collection

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were analyzed in terms of percentage, mean values, frequency, and standard deviation, in combination with figures, tables, and descriptive discussion. The interviewing responses were transcribed and interpreted to present comprehensive data, and more importantly, to reinforce the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Effect size was correspondingly calculated to quantify differences and the effectiveness of the songs' treatment between the groups (Cohen, 1988). The descriptions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Statistical power analysis adapted from Cohen's d effect size

Effect Sizes	Descriptions
- Cohen's d equal or less than 0.20	- Small effect size
- Cohen's d in between 0.20 to 0.80	- Medium effect size
- Cohen's d equal or greater than 0.80	- Large effect size

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Pretest and Posttest in Comparison

Table 3
Pretest scores in comparison between the groups

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Pretest with songs	11.57	60	5.83
	Pretest without songs	9.87	60	5.59

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Sig.(1-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1: Pretest 1, Pretest 2		1.70	7.43	0.96	1.7724	59	1.0000	1.0000

Table 3 shows pretest scores comparing the experimental and the control groups. An independent sample t-test indicates no statistical significance in pretest scores with a *p*-value above 0.05. It can be said that the students in both groups and within each group possess equivalent background in vocabulary input and knowledge prior to participating in pedagogical activities. The song inclusion group exhibits a slightly higher mean score ($M = 11.57$) compared to the control group ($M = 9.87$). The effect size is medium (0.30).

Table 4
Pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group in comparison

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Pretest	11.57	60	5.83
	Posttest	16.13	60	2.65

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Sig.(1-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1: Pretest - Posttest	4.57	4.62	0.60	7.6523	59	0.001	0.001

In Table 4, the mean score of the pretest in the context of songs' inclusion in language pedagogy is 11.57. As can be discerned, the mean score of the posttest becomes higher than that of the pretest, with the mean score of 16.13. The finding of the present study displays a significant difference between the results of the pretest and the posttest in this treatment group ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5
Pretest and posttest scores of the control group in comparison

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Pretest	9.87	60	5.59
	Posttest	12.02	60	5.15

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Sig.(1-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1: Pretest - Posttest	2.15	3.28	0.42	5.0738	59	0.001	0.001

Table 5 illustrates the differences between the pretest and the posttest of the students in the control group. The mean score of the posttest is slightly increased from 9.87 to 12.02, with a standard deviation of 3.28. Statistical significance is also evident in this group ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6
Posttest scores of the experimental and the control group in comparison

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Posttest without songs	12.02	60	5.15
	Posttest with songs	16.13	60	2.65

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Sig.(1-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1: Posttest 1 - 2	4.12	6.23	0.80	5.1181	59	0.001	0.001

With the results of the posttest comparing the experimental and the control groups, a significant difference is statistically evident in the mean scores ($p < 0.05$). The results in Table 6 reflect that the students in the group with songs' inclusion can achieve higher scores in the posttest when compared to the students in the group without songs. With the treatment of songs in learning activities, vocabulary retention and mastery improve on the basis of the posttest results in this group ($M = 16.13$). From a different angle, the control group presents less development in the posttest as reflected in the mean score ($M = 12.02$). The large effect power confirms a robust difference at 1.00 (Cohen, 1988).

In particular, the findings derived from the pretest and the posttest in the overall procedure present an apparent answer to the first research question. Perceived differences in students' vocabulary learning and proficiency as influenced by songs' treatment are statistically evident ($p < 0.05$). Although the research participants exhibited differences and variation in fields of study, the statistical analysis from Table 3 indicates that the students' proficiency in vocabulary between the groups is not significantly different ($p > 0.05$). The medium effect is observed (0.30). In other words, the students in both groups were found to have equal background knowledge in terms of vocabulary before the process of songs' inclusion in the learning activity. Thus, there is a window of opportunity for song inclusion to measure significant differences in proficiency within and between the groups.

With this issue, song inclusion in language pedagogy brings significant differences in vocabulary learning progress and mastery, as depicted in the pretest and the posttest of the treatment group in comparison with the control group. As described in Table 4, there is an outstanding improvement in the mean scores between the pretest ($M = 11.57$) and the posttest

($M = 16.13$) with a large effect size of Cohen's d (1.01). The experimental group significantly exhibits progress in vocabulary learning, word retention, and proficiency ($p < 0.05$). Such a finding extends beyond ESL contexts in the matter of vocabulary development as reported in previous literature (Bawawa, 2020; Khan, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

In support of Faisal and Putri (2023), Karim et al. (2022), and Malekian (2016), the current study demonstrates the effectiveness of English song inclusion towards mnemonics, proficiency, and mastery, within the Thai EFL tertiary context. Although a significant difference is evident in the group without song treatment, Cohen's d effect size is reported at 0.40, indicating a medium effect. Given the plausible explanation of this finding, other approaches and classroom techniques tend to be employed in facilitating pedagogy and learning proficiency. Interactive word play, digital-based games, and AI technology-assisted platforms can also be used in diverse manners as claimed in previous research (Chou, 2014; Fithriani, 2021; Rasti-Behbahani, 2021; Thadphoothon & Samrit, 2025).

As another effective alternative to the abovementioned teaching techniques, this research finding highlights the effectiveness of songs with significant differences and effect sizes in vocabulary learning and mastery specifically featured in the EFL higher education context. The students with songs' inclusion in classroom engagement represent higher proficiency and vocabulary mastery in the posttest, compared to the students from the group without songs' treatment.

4.2 Students' Attitudes towards Song Inclusion in Pedagogy

The second research question investigates the extent to which song inclusion in English pedagogy develops students' motivation and positive attitudes towards pleasant, constructive vocabulary learning and language acquisition in the undergraduate setting. The structured questionnaire entails the results as follows.

The first part of the questionnaire provides students' assessment in terms of their language proficiency. Most students evaluated their English proficiency at a moderate level (51.60%), followed by a communicative level (33.20%). There were 13.40 percent of the students who considered their English skills at the level of 'needs improvement'; and only 1.80 percent of the respondents assessed their performance at the intermediate level. These personal assessments denote different linguistic proficiencies of the participants ranging from a low level to an average extent. The results from this section also disclose that English songs play a major role in the students' daily lives. The questionnaire findings indicate that almost 67 percent of the students prefer to listen to 15 to 20 English songs per week. Most of their desired songs belong to a new generation of pop culture-based genres. However, most students report that they pay their attention to

entertainment and enjoyment in listening (65.30%) rather than the linguistic contents (34.70%) when they are listening to English songs.

Table 7
Statistical ranges of values with descriptive interpretations

Statistical Ranges:	1.00 - 1.80	1.81 - 2.60	2.61 - 3.40	3.41 - 4.20	4.21 - 5.00
Interpretations:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Descriptive Ratings:	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

The second part of the questionnaire exhibits the results of how song inclusion in classroom pedagogy affects students' attitudes and perceptions of vocabulary learning and language acquisition in a higher education context. With statistical treatment of the data, descriptive statistics were employed to measure frequencies, means, and standard deviations based on the designed indicators. As displayed in Table 7, the following statistical ranges of values were assigned along with their descriptive interpretations.

Table 8
Retention facet for analytical indicator 1

Analysis Indicator 1: Item Number 1 – 5			
Surveyed Questions	Mean (N = 60)	S.D.	Attitudes
1. Do you agree on employing English songs in English teaching and learning activities?	4.28	0.78	Strongly Agree
2. Songs' inclusion on learning activities reinforces learners in terms of English vocabulary.	4.37	0.71	Strongly Agree
3. Songs' inclusion on English pedagogical activities can facilitate learners' vocabulary mnemonic.	4.30	0.79	Strongly Agree
4. I acquire a lot of vocabulary when English songs are employed in teaching and learning activities.	4.40	0.78	Strongly Agree
5. Using songs in learning English vocabulary can reinforce the learners in vocabulary mastery on daily basis.	4.23	0.81	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean with Standard Deviation for Analysis Indicator 1	4.32	0.04	Strongly Agree

Table 8 demonstrates and summarizes student-perceived attitudes towards songs' inclusivity based on the first analytical indicators. The findings reveal that the majority of the students strongly agree with the benefits of songs' inclusion in fostering vocabulary acquisition ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.78$), vocabulary reinforcement in repertoire ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.71$), followed by the improvement of vocabulary mnemonics and word retention ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.79$). A robust agreement is also reported by the students regarding songs' inclusion in pedagogical activities ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.78$) with its practical contribution to vocabulary mastery on a daily basis ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.81$). With the overall perceptions as displayed in the composite mean ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.04$), it can be concluded that songs' inclusion, to a considerable extent, strengthens vocabulary learning and acquisition in terms of word retention and mnemonics, from which it extends students' vocabulary mastery on a daily basis.

Table 9

Motivational aspect for analytical indicator 2

Analysis Indicator 2: Item Number 6 - 10			
Surveyed Questions	Mean (N = 60)	S.D.	Attitudes
6. The students think that they are interested in learning English vocabulary via using songs as a pedagogical resource.	4.40	0.64	Strongly Agree
7. With English songs' inclusion on language pedagogy, the learners are most likely to search lyrics, vocabulary, and the meaning of songs they are listening to.	4.45	0.70	Strongly Agree
8. Songs' inclusion on English pedagogy can improve my language learning motivation.	4.60	0.64	Strongly Agree
9. Songs' inclusion on English pedagogy stimulates your active learning on English language.	4.52	0.62	Strongly Agree
10. Songs' inclusion promotes greater intention in English language learning.	4.48	0.70	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean with Standard Deviation for Analysis Indicator 2	4.49	0.04	Strongly Agree

With learning motivation, the results from the second indicator in Table 9 illustrate that song inclusion in English pedagogy encourages students' learning motivation ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.64$), active learning engagement ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.62$), and greater intention to engage in

language learning ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.70$). With song inclusion in vocabulary learning, the students strongly believe that such an approach fosters a more attractive learning experience ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.64$) with positive, enthusiastic attitudes to learn via lyrics ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.70$). With the composite mean ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.04$), the present study highlights students' constructive motivation for vocabulary and language learning as influenced by song inclusion in English pedagogy in a higher education context.

Table 10
Affective-filter analysis for analytical indicator 3

Analysis Indicator 3: Item Number 11 - 15			
Surveyed Questions	Mean (N = 60)	S.D.	Attitudes
11. Songs' inclusion on English pedagogy fosters relaxing experience in language learning.	4.60	0.69	Strongly Agree
12. The use of songs in language learning encourages my English pronunciation.	4.45	0.67	Strongly Agree
13. Less stressful experience brings more efficiency in English language learning.	4.45	0.72	Strongly Agree
14. I enjoy spending leisure time listening English songs for a relaxing purpose.	4.62	0.64	Strongly Agree
15. Relaxing experience in language learning improves my vocabulary retention.	4.50	0.70	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean with Standard Deviation for Analysis Indicator 3	4.52	0.03	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean, Standard Deviation, and Overall Perceptions	4.44	0.70	Strongly Agree

In Table 10, the third analysis indicator determines the roles of affective filters on language learning and acquisition. The results indicate that the students frequently spend their leisure time with listening to English songs for relaxation ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.64$). It is also found that songs' treatment fosters an enjoyable learning experience, as strongly agreed by the students ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.69$). Under a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere, the students strongly agree that songs' inclusion enhances vocabulary retention ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.70$), English word pronunciation ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.67$), and efficiency in language learning ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.72$). From this point of view, affective filters play significant roles in language learning and acquisition as expressed in the composite mean of 4.52 ($SD = 0.03$). In this indicator, the students strongly agree that an

entertaining, less stressful atmosphere promotes constructive engagement in vocabulary learning and language acquisition.

According to the overall results, the second research question has been answered in the sense that song inclusion in language pedagogy fosters positive attitudes and productive motivations among students, thus enhancing vocabulary learning and mastery on the one hand and pedagogical benefits on the other hand. The composite mean ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.70$) derived from Table 10 indicates a consensus among students' perceptions and attitudes towards songs as facilitators on vocabulary learning and language pedagogy, in which word retention and mnemonic learning motivation are enhanced under conditions of low affective filter.

In relation to contemporary frameworks and most innovative literatures, the current study exhibits a congruent phenomenon in which language learning and acquisition can be beneficially facilitated and supported under enjoyable, relaxing environments (Fortuna, 2025; Getie, 2020; Gong et al., 2023; Krashen, 1982).

At the broader context of education, the findings, particularly in EFL tertiary education, consolidate Malekian's (2016) framework in three proposed dimensions: psychological accommodation with the improvement of retention and mastery, comforting theme with pleasant learning environments, and positive motivation with attentive participation. Along the same line as Kusnierek's (2016) study, songs' content embrace thematic tones and feelings that engage learners' emotional domain and personal passions. For that reason, songs' engagement both implicitly and explicitly fosters individual learning motivation and interactive attention towards interesting content, featured singers, and the lexical choices and cultural trends in language use.

In exclusive terms of vocabulary development, the present study emphasizes findings consistent with former studies and extending beyond primary and secondary levels of education (Bawawa, 2020; Faisal & Putri, 2023; Karim et al., 2022; Malekian, 2016; Suriyatham, 2015; Tse, 2015). It has been established that positive attitudes, constructive motivation, and high confidence in linguistic and vocabulary learning are associated with lower affective barriers. Regardless of learners' equivalent background in English vocabulary and proficiency, lexical learning and mastery are successfully developed in this research study. Similarly, prospective advantages include improved auditorial skills, pronunciation and accent development, and speaking performance and fluency, are by-product of song use on vocabulary (In-Lom, P. S., 2020; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025; Rattanalert et al., 2023).

The responses from the interview also support the findings from both research questions in multiple dimensions. The interview questions were proposed as follows: (1) What

factors do you use for considering English songs to be listened to?; (2) In your opinion, would it be possible to extend the use of songs to other language-skill improvements apart from vocabulary?; and (3) To what extent does song inclusion in vocabulary learning and mastery promote constructive attitudes and positive learning motivations towards English?

With the first question, the interviewees report listening to English songs for their personal passion and emotional mood. With further exploration, the motives driven by their passion are derived from favorite artists, rhymes, rhythms, and emotional tone of music, thus providing an enjoyable, relaxing experience when they listen repeatedly. Impressive meanings of word choices and sentences in songs bring a sentimental touch to their individual emotions, previous experiences, and personal affections. The responses from the questionnaire and the interview are consistent with Kusnierek's study (2016) since English songs increase student engagement and motivation in daily learning contexts with a comforting feature. Though the core purposes of listening as perceived by the students are rooted in entertainment and personal preference, vocabulary learning through semantic and language content offers valuable pedagogical affordances for linguistic learning.

The results from the second question indicate practical characteristics of songs in listening and speaking skills. In general, most students believe that songs can improve their listening capability, vocabulary knowledge, and speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation and accent development. Such findings have been widely reported and generally supported by prior research literature (Boothe & West, 2015; In-Lom, P. S., 2020; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025). However, the recent study extends the application of songs with extensive implications on integrative language improvement in four skills with cognitive development.

In alignment with former works, the present study suggests that songs' inclusion in language pedagogy should be treated as a fundamental input in reading comprehension, grammar teaching, language mechanics, reflection in writing, conversation in discussion, and interactive classroom participation (Luo et al., 2022; Rattanalert et al., 2023; Richards & Ranandya, 2002). For instance, lecturers can employ English songs as a case study for language and grammatical structure based on communicative language use in daily contexts. Beyond that, song inclusion can be engaged as reading, speaking, and writing inputs to motivate students' discussion, opinion expression, and critical writing in reflection via spoken and written language. In addition, songs encourage students to share their ideas, opinions, and perceptions, to practice communicative language in written and spoken English, and to learn how language and culture are represented and intertwined. These contributions extend beyond the development of four

skills as consolidated and synthesized from concomitant frameworks (Faisal & Putri, 2023; Lems, 2001; Malekian, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

From the third question, major responses from students support and confirm the findings from the questionnaire concerning the relationship between affective filters and positive attitudes and motivation towards language learning. At this point, the vast majority of answers are in conformity with Daly's (1991) framework, Fortuna's (2025) study; Gong's (2023) research theme, Krashen's (1982) framework, and Krashen's (1983) principles. Constructive attitudes and optimistic motivation towards language learning are strongly enhanced under a low level of affective filter.

5. Summary and Further Implications

5.1 Summary

The overall results fulfill the purposes of the study by spotlighting the students' positive attitude and perception of song inclusion in the English classroom. Regarding benefits, the improvement in vocabulary learning, retention, and mastery has been statistically evident within and beyond the groups. Likewise, the inclusivity of songs, in this tertiary context, encourages constructive learning motivation with sustained motivational engagement within an edutainment atmosphere. The recent study has conjointly demonstrated that English songs, with their persuasive and pervasive features, can be used as extensive resources in facilitating vocabulary learning, a vast repertoire in language acquisition, and a knowledge-based approach in language, including social and cultural studies.

Based on the conceptual framework, both research questions have been answered by shedding light on vocabulary learning and levels of affective filter. In spite of comparable vocabulary knowledge and linguistic background, statistically significant differences have been found in the students' posttest scores. The first research question indicates that songs used in language pedagogy yield beneficial results in vocabulary retention and word mastery in the experimental group. The posttest scores of the students have significantly improved when compared to the pretest within the group and between-group comparisons with the control group. Perceived differences have been evident in vocabulary learning and word mastery between both groups and within the experimental group. According to the second research question, song inclusion in language learning substantially endorses the students' constructive attitudes and attentive motivation beyond vocabulary acquisition by ameliorating affective filter levels. With a less stressful and more comforting environment, constructive attitudes

and enhanced motivation were observed in language learning and acquisition above lexical outcomes.

The findings also illuminate potential strategies and practical contributions in a broader area of language skill development in the undergraduate setting. Given the low affective filter condition, song use can be extended to four integrative language skills for further improvement in listening comprehension, speaking skills, pronunciation, reading comprehension of song lyrics, and interactive writing activities in practice. Further implications become more valuable in language study itself as well as social and cultural learning contexts.

5.2 Further Implications

With the research implications, the recent study engages with contemporary technological developments in relation to music inclusivity. The treatment of songs concurrently extends a definite possibility, by which derivative contributions can be established between engagement with pedagogical techniques and within the constraints of artificial intelligence and digital environments.

Songs can be tremendously applied as principal and supplementary inputs for receptive skills in language learning. Based on its unique feature of sound, it is certain that song use can be effectively implemented through listening and pronunciation in practice with words and sentences (Khan, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). The present study further advises that assorted genres of English songs can be treated as subject matters of discussion within communicative activities in highly interactive courses. As supported by Faisal and Putri's study (2023), greater motivation, positive perception, and enthusiastic participation have been observed in relation to language learning on a daily communication basis. In the same way, song lyrics can be arranged as supplementary inputs for reading comprehension, language mechanics, and grammatical structure instruction, or even authentic texts for translation practice.

On productive skills, song inclusion and featured artists appear to be valuable themes of opinion expression and reflection in spoken and written assignments. With thorough consideration and preparation, various contributions of song engagement can be executed through a range of in-class and out-of-class activities rooted in pedagogical strategies and course designs. As guided by previous studies, the contents of songs with carefully designed selection criteria should be considered based on learning objectives, purposes of implementation, and varying levels of linguistic proficiency (Karim et al., 2022; Kusnierek, 2016; Malekian, 2016; Tse, 2015).

Another implication deals with communicative confidence and competence. Under the same line of thought as Gan's (2012) theory and Krashen's (1983) principles, communicative

competence has become achievable in the context of low anxiety, high confidence, and relaxed engagement. As a key guideline, a song-based approach boosts speaking performance and linguistic fluency (Kim et al., 2024; Kitjaroonchai & Sukman, 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). This present research recommends songs' use to strengthen language learners' confidence, attentive involvement, and increased motivation towards classroom interactions and communication activities.

In contrast to observed difficulties in song selection and implementation, this article puts forth practical guidelines as a future contribution. Suggestions have been rendered via the current findings combined with earlier associated literature (Bawawa, 2020; Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Poppleton, 2001; Tasnim, 2022). First, music genres should be aligned with learner generations. This is because a listener's age correlates with language proficiencies and personal interests (Griffie, 1992). For example, this study has adopted contemporary pop-culture songs that yield convincing results among university students with different levels of proficiency (Baoan, 2008; Kusnierek, 2016). Nursery rhymes can be employed with primary children, whereas authentic real-world songs are suitable for adult and adolescent learners. Second, song content needs to be deemed with contextual, cultural, and goal-oriented appropriateness. Song lyrics should be authentic, clear, and comprehensible to allow learners to potentially access linguistic and semantic content (Poppleton, 2001; Tasnim, 2022). Also, vocabulary and word choices loaded in songs should meet and be appropriate to learners' proficiency, lexical complexity, and cultural sensitivity and differences. Therefore, songs with motivating and positive contents are recommended for versatility in use and development (Baoan, 2008). Third, speed and length have been considered interrelated variables within the above guidelines. A moderate tempo of songs with three to five minutes in length seems to fit with different proficiency levels.

Eventually, interlinked influences should be considered in relation to classroom size and time duration, technical and facility supports, course objective and curriculum design based on policy, constructive belief and creative attitude (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Tasnim, 2022). With this alignment, perceived challenges can be transformed into more effective opportunities.

Beneficial contribution extends beyond the aforementioned issues, with culture as a rich pedagogical resource. The study findings indicate that the treatment of song reflects cultural dimensions as rich, persuasive repertoires for extensive language learning and intercultural studies. Given Hall's (1959) theoretical statement, the concept portrays "culture is communication and communication is culture" (p. 169, as cited in Samovar & Porter, 2004, p. 28). Culture

plays an essential role in designing human communication in line with specific cultures that people value, and vice versa, communication reflects the cultural values they hold.

Thus, the recent article recommends the use of songs in linguistic pedagogy as a creative, multifaceted input for language and cross-cultural communication studies. Such treatment becomes a thematic approach to investigate how language and culture are intertwined. In support of Lems' (2001) suggestion, song inclusion in linguistic pedagogy can embrace intercultural dimensions and values akin to the social use of language with its mechanisms. Along with its attractive features, songs allow learners to acquire extensive knowledge in both language and cultural studies, ranging from cultural heritage, historical knowledge, and aesthetic values.

More particularly, these learning phenomena occur under conditions of comfort, motivation, and low-affective atmosphere to support envisioned success and achievement. Overall, it is envisaged that the findings of the current study could at least address previous research gaps in which song inclusion has been centralized in early childhood, primary, and secondary education, specifically as a source of listening and speaking practices.

Notwithstanding its limitations and research boundaries, this study does suggest that the treatment of song can enhance productive vocabulary learning and mastery, positive motivation, interactive participation, and other contributions towards English pedagogy in the tertiary setting. The minimal sample size and random sampling method are the limitations of the study. Further research should be carried out with other Thai governmental universities as opposed to the private ones, efficiency of song selection criteria, the inclusivity of language and cultural studies, and learning effectiveness across diverse levels of English proficiency.

It is crucial to note that songs might not be the best solution and the most advanced approach for language learning and acquisition compared to AI technology. However, it can be applied as another window of opportunity for the development of English language learning and integrative skills under the condition of a stressful environment, high communication anxiety, and limited technological advancement and accessibility.

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Name-Surname: _____

Student ID: _____

Major: _____

=== Vocabulary Pretest ===

Instructions: *Making pair each word with a closely meaning item. (20 marks)*

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1. begin | _____ | A. strong |
| 2. meaning | _____ | B. thanks |
| 3. strength | _____ | C. difficult |
| 4. because | _____ | D. start |
| 5. grateful | _____ | E. tiny spot |
| 6. youth | _____ | F. definition |
| 7. hard | _____ | G. teen |
| 8. ride | _____ | H. angry |
| 9. dazzle | _____ | I. break |
| 10. speck | _____ | J. for the reason |
| 11. broken | _____ | K. cruise |
| 12. resound | _____ | L. exciting |
| 13. furious | _____ | M. get money back |
| 14. cash back | _____ | N. sadness |
| 15. curiosity | _____ | O. echo |
| 16. sorrow | _____ | P. questioning |
| 17. suddenly | _____ | Q. all |
| 18. belong | _____ | R. at once |
| 19. whole | _____ | S. determine |
| 20. decide | _____ | T. owned by |

Name-Surname: _____
Student ID: _____
Major: _____

=== Vocabulary Posttest ===

Instructions: Choose the best answer to complete each sentence. (20 marks)

1. The final exam was very _____. I think my score would be lower than the last semester.
a. easy b. difficult c. sorrow d. better
2. My greatest _____ is problem-solving skill. I believe it is useful for this job.
a. mean b. touch c. strength d. weakness
3. I have got my _____ back because this product is 20% discount.
a. cash b. pay c. draw d. give
4. The sun is _____ in the east; and the weather is really hot.
a. falling b. shining c. breaking d. leaving
5. Yesterday, I was one hour late and John was _____ with me.
a. grateful b. happy c. furious d. dirty
6. I _____ my great time with a family during a Songkran's holiday.
a. treat b. spend c. make d. watch
7. Because of hard rain, tourists were asked to _____ at a hotel.
a. write b. walk c. press d. stay
8. Jane was sick for two days. Today, she is getting _____. She can't go to work.
a. worse b. better c. prettier d. nicer
9. Firefighter took two hours to _____ the fire.
a. promote b. visit c. control d. resound
10. I have to get up earlier in order to _____ the bus at 6 o'clock.
a. feel b. walk c. catch d. prove
11. The manager of the company died of heart _____.
a. failure b. success c. sadness d. medium

12. It has been believed that putting bamboo in a house _____ energy and good luck.
a. belongs b. begins c. brings d. burns
13. For your safety, you should walk on pedestrian _____ alongside the road.
a. warehouse b. station c. beach d. pathway
14. For a job application process, you are needed to _____ this form.
a. improve b. resound c. complete d. promote
15. John has _____ his personal life for the success of his career.
a. decided b. sacrificed c. trapped d. believed
16. This bag is not mine. It _____ to you.
a. designs b. belongs c. pursues d. imagines
17. I love Disney Fireworks Show because it is a _____ performance.
a. curious b. boring c. dazzling d. broken
18. Peter joined a/an _____ club since he was twelve years old in a high school.
a. soldier b. youth c. amazing d. adult
19. If your _____ is poor, you should not drive a car.
a. hearing b. sight c. touch d. scent
20. An executive officer uses a _____ decision to operate an organization.
a. brave b. dangerous c. broken d. sorrow
- _____