

Learning vocabulary through music streaming: Students' perceptions on spotify integration

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of digital media in language learning has opened new opportunities to enhance vocabulary instruction; however, research on students' perceptions of music streaming platforms from a descriptive qualitative perspective remains limited. This study aims to explore students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning medium to enhance vocabulary mastery. Adopting a descriptive qualitative research design, the study involved students who engaged with Spotify-based materials in their vocabulary learning activities. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth insights into students' experiences, attitudes, and perception of the benefits of using Spotify for vocabulary learning. The findings indicate that students generally perceived Spotify positively, as it provided authentic language exposure, increased learning motivation, and supported vocabulary development through contextualized audio input. Students reported that learning vocabulary through music facilitated better understanding of word meaning, pronunciation, and usage in context. Despite these advantages, several challenges were identified, including difficulties in understanding certain accents and maintaining focus when the content was not aligned with learning objectives. This study contributes to the field of digital-assisted language learning by highlighting students' subjective experiences and perceptions of integrating music streaming platforms into vocabulary instruction. The findings suggest that Spotify can function as an effective supplementary tool in vocabulary learning when accompanied by appropriate pedagogical guidance and careful material selection.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of language learning, as it directly influences learners' ability to understand texts, express ideas, and communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms. Learners with limited vocabulary often have difficulties in comprehending learning materials, participating in classroom discussions, and producing meaningful language output.

Several scholars emphasize that vocabulary knowledge is a key predictor of overall language proficiency and academic success in language learning contexts (Nation, 2022).

In many language learning contexts, vocabulary instruction is still dominated by traditional approaches such as memorization and isolated word lists, which may not sufficiently engage learners or promote meaningful learning. These methods often present vocabulary without adequate context, making it difficult for learners to apply words appropriately in real communication. Simamora et al. (2023) contend that in order to improve learners' comprehension and retention, vocabulary acquisition should be incorporated into meaningful language use.

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed educational practices, including language learning. Digital tools and online platforms provide learners with access to authentic materials, flexible learning opportunities, and interactive learning experiences. Technology-enhanced language learning promotes autonomy and motivation while enabling students to engage with language beyond the classroom, according to Alakrash & Razak (2021). By exposing students to natural pronunciation and contextual language use, audio-based digital media in particular have been demonstrated to enhance vocabulary development (Vc & Rao, 2021).

Music has long been recognized as an effective medium in language learning due to its repetitive structure, emotional engagement, and ability to create a relaxed learning atmosphere. According to earlier research, music and songs can boost students' enthusiasm, enhance vocabulary recall, and facilitate contextual word interpretation (Ni Wayan Satri Adnyani, 2020). Music also provides authentic language input helping learners encounter vocabulary in meaningful and memorable contexts.

Alongside the increasing use of music in language learning, digital music streaming platforms have gained widespread popularity among students. Platforms such as Spotify offer access to a vast collection of songs and audio content from various genres and cultural backgrounds. These platforms' flexibility and accessibility enable students to interact with real language input at any time and from any location, which is consistent with the ideas of informal and self-directed learning (Firmansyah et al., 2026).

The integration of digital applications and multimedia technologies in language learning has been the subject of several prior research, which have demonstrated their beneficial effects on student engagement and learning results (Ugli, 2024). It has long been recognized that utilizing music as a pedagogical tool for language acquisition is particularly effective for vocabulary enhancement. Songs provide pupils with extensive experience in linguistic structures, authentic pronunciation, and contextually relevant input. According to Millington (2011), songs might render learning more enjoyable and relaxing, hence increasing students' propensity to utilize the language. They can assist children in retaining words through repetition and rhythmic patterns. Eka et al. (2020) asserts that vocabulary acquisition is more efficacious when children encounter words repeatedly in meaningful contexts rather than through rote memorization.

Due to the rapid advancement of digital technology, music streaming services such as Spotify are increasingly beneficial for educational purposes. Digital platforms allow learners to interact with genuine language resources beyond the

classroom, promoting independent and informal language learning approaches. Technology-enhanced language learning environments provide learners with authentic linguistic input and promote language skill development through flexible and engaging media (Alakrash & Razak, 2021). In this context, music streaming services may be beneficial for vocabulary acquisition and listening practice. Previous studies have investigated the pedagogical use of songs and music platforms in the learning of the English language. Research suggests that listening to English songs enhances vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, and learner motivation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Millington, 2011). Recent studies have investigated the use of Spotify in English learning contexts, focusing mainly on measurable outcomes such as improvements in listening comprehension and vocabulary test scores (Butar & Katemba, 2023; Azis et al., 2024). This research provides compelling evidence that digital music platforms can enhance language learning processes.

However, although previous research demonstrates the effectiveness of songs and music platforms in language acquisition, many studies primarily emphasize quantitative learning outcomes, overlooking learners' perceptions and experiences concerning the incorporation of these platforms into their educational practices. The viewpoints of learners are essential, as their attitudes, motivation, and involvement significantly influence the effectiveness of language learning strategies (Alakrash & Razak, 2021). Understanding students' experiences with digital learning media can provide significant insights into the effectiveness of these tools in real educational settings.

Furthermore, despite Spotify's widespread popularity among students as an integral component of their daily digital routines, there is a paucity of research examining students' perceptions of Spotify as a tool for vocabulary acquisition, particularly within high school environments. Examining students' perspectives can clarify the potential benefits of Spotify for vocabulary development and the challenges learners have when utilized authentic audio materials. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning instrument to enhance vocabulary acquisition through a descriptive qualitative methodology. This study aims to offer qualitative insights into the educational potential of music streaming platforms for vocabulary training by analyzing students' experiences, perceived advantages, and learning challenges.

In the context of secondary education, particularly at the senior high school level, students are generally familiar with digital music platforms as part of their daily lives. However, this familiarity is rarely maximized for pedagogical purposes in formal language learning settings. English learning activities often remain confined to textbooks and classroom-centered instruction, leaving limited space for integrating students' everyday digital practices into learning processes. As a result, there is a need to explore learning media that bridge students' digital habits with educational objectives, especially in vocabulary learning.

Moreover, integrating popular digital platforms into language learning aligns with current educational demands that emphasize learner-centered and technology-supported instruction. When learning media resonate with students' interests and real-life experiences, students are more likely to engage actively and meaningfully in the learning process. Therefore, examining students' perceptions of

using Spotify for vocabulary learning is essential to understand how such platforms can be pedagogically utilized rather than merely serving as entertainment tools. This perspective further justifies the importance of investigating Spotify integration from students' viewpoints.

To address this gap, the present study focuses on exploring students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning medium to enhance vocabulary mastery. This research aims to investigate students' experiences, perceived advantages, and challenges in learning vocabulary through Spotify. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the field of digital-assisted language learning by providing qualitative insights into the pedagogical potential of music streaming platforms. Furthermore, this study offers practical contributions for educators by highlighting strategies for integrating Spotify as a supplementary tool to create more engaging and meaningful vocabulary learning experiences.

METHOD

Research Design and Research Setting

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning medium to enhance vocabulary mastery. A descriptive qualitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to obtain in-depth descriptions of students' experiences, opinions, and attitudes toward the integration of Spotify in English vocabulary learning. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 8 Bengkulu over a period of three months during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, allowing sufficient time for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings within a natural educational setting.

Population and Participants

The population of this study consisted of all eleventh-grade (XI) students at SMA Negeri 8 Bengkulu. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, particularly students who had experience using Spotify for learning English. Based on these criteria, 35 students of grade XI were selected as research participants. The respondents included both male and female students, with an age range between 16 and 18 years, ensuring that participants were developmentally appropriate and had sufficient exposure to digital media for learning purposes.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected using two instruments: an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed to all participants to obtain initial data regarding their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward the use of Spotify in vocabulary learning. The questionnaire consisted of four main aspects, namely: (1) students' general perceptions of Spotify as a learning medium, (2) learning motivation when using Spotify, (3) vocabulary exposure and contextual understanding gained from listening to English songs, and (4) challenges encountered while using Spotify for vocabulary learning.

A total of eight open-ended questions were developed based on these aspects to encourage students to describe their experiences and opinions in detail. The use of open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express their perspectives regarding the benefits and limitations of Spotify in supporting vocabulary learning.

Following the questionnaire phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten selected participants to obtain deeper and more detailed information. The interviews enabled students to elaborate on their responses, explain how Spotify was used in their learning activities, and describe the perceived benefits as well as challenges encountered during vocabulary learning through music streaming. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity and allow participants to express their ideas freely.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, all questionnaire responses and interview transcripts were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. The researcher then conducted data coding by identifying meaningful units related to students' perceptions, learning experiences, benefits, and challenges of using Spotify for vocabulary mastery. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes that reflected recurring patterns across participants' responses. The themes were interpreted descriptively to address the research objectives. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

In addition, to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, this study applied several strategies to enhance credibility and dependability. Credibility was strengthened by ensuring that the data collected accurately represented students' perceptions through prolonged engagement during the data collection period and careful interpretation of participants' responses. The use of multiple data sources, namely open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, also contributed to data triangulation, which helped confirm the consistency of the findings across different instruments.

Furthermore, ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary involvement. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participants' anonymity was maintained by using codes instead of real names during data transcription and reporting. These procedures ensured that the research was conducted ethically and respected participants' rights.

RESULT

This section presents the findings of the study derived from the analysis of data collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings address the research objective, which is to explore students' perceptions of using Spotify to enhance vocabulary mastery. The results are

organized into thematic subsections representing the main patterns identified from the data analysis.

Students' Positive Perceptions of Using Spotify in Vocabulary Learning

The findings indicate that most students perceived the use of Spotify positively in supporting their vocabulary learning. Students reported that Spotify provided a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience compared to conventional learning methods. The integration of music into vocabulary learning was perceived as reducing boredom and increasing students' interest in learning English. These findings suggest that Spotify functions as a motivating learning medium that encourages students to engage more actively with vocabulary learning.

Increased Learning Motivation

One prominent theme emerging from the data was increased learning motivation. Many students stated that listening to English songs through Spotify made vocabulary learning more enjoyable and less stressful. Music helped create a relaxed learning atmosphere, which encouraged students to explore new vocabulary independently. This finding differs from previous studies that primarily emphasized vocabulary improvement scores, as this study highlights students' emotional engagement and intrinsic motivation gained from music-based learning.

Vocabulary Exposure and Contextual Understanding

Another important finding relates to students' perceptions of vocabulary exposure and contextual understanding. Students reported that Spotify allowed them to encounter new words naturally through song lyrics. They believed that learning vocabulary from songs helped them understand word meanings, pronunciation, and usage in context. Unlike traditional vocabulary learning methods that rely on isolated word lists, Spotify enabled students to learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts, which facilitated better comprehension and retention.

Challenges in Using Spotify for Vocabulary Learning

In addition to the overall positive perceptions, the findings also revealed several challenges faced by students when using Spotify for vocabulary learning. These challenges indicate that the integration of Spotify requires careful guidance to maximize its learning benefits.

Difficulties with Language Features

Some students reported difficulties related to fast song tempo, unfamiliar accents, and unclear pronunciation. These language features sometimes made it difficult for students to understand the lyrics and identify new vocabulary. This finding contrasts with previous research that assumes music always facilitates comprehension, as the present study shows that not all musical content is equally suitable for vocabulary learning.

Distraction and Learning Focus

Another challenge identified was the potential for distraction. Several students mentioned that they tended to focus more on the melody than on the vocabulary being learned. This finding suggests that without clear learning objectives and teacher guidance, Spotify may function more as entertainment than as an effective learning tool.

Students' Perceptions Based on Interview Findings

The interview data further supported the questionnaire findings by providing deeper insights into students' experiences. One participant stated:

Excerpt 1:

"Listening to English songs on Spotify makes learning vocabulary more fun. I can learn new words without feeling pressured like in regular classes."

Another participant highlighted the benefit of contextual learning but also mentioned challenges:

Excerpt 2:

"I can understand how words are used in sentences through songs, but sometimes the pronunciation is too fast, so it is difficult to catch the meaning."

These interview excerpts confirm that while students generally perceive Spotify as beneficial for vocabulary learning, its effectiveness depends on appropriate song selection and instructional support.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students perceive Spotify as a beneficial supplementary tool for enhancing vocabulary mastery. The positive perceptions include increased motivation, authentic vocabulary exposure, and improved contextual understanding. However, challenges such as language difficulty and distraction were also identified. Compared to previous studies that focus mainly on measurable learning outcomes, this study provides qualitative evidence highlighting students' subjective experiences and perceptions of Spotify integration in vocabulary learning.

Another notable finding of this study concerns students' perceptions of Spotify as a flexible learning medium. Many students reported that Spotify allowed them to learn vocabulary outside the classroom, particularly during their free time. This flexibility enabled students to engage in repeated exposure to English vocabulary without being limited by time and place. Such perceptions indicate that Spotify supports informal learning practices and complements formal classroom instruction.

In addition, students perceived that the use of Spotify contributed to their listening confidence, which indirectly supported vocabulary learning. Several students stated that frequent exposure to English songs helped them become more familiar with spoken English, making them less anxious when encountering new vocabulary. This finding suggests that Spotify not only facilitates vocabulary exposure but also helps students develop confidence in processing authentic English input.

Moreover, the findings reveal that students valued teacher guidance when Spotify was integrated into learning activities. Students expressed that clear

instructions, vocabulary-focused tasks, and guided discussions helped them gain more learning benefits from listening to songs. Without such guidance, some students felt unsure about how to focus on vocabulary learning. This finding emphasizes that Spotify is most effective when combined with structured instructional support rather than being used independently without clear learning objectives.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning medium to enhance vocabulary mastery. The findings revealed that students generally perceived Spotify positively, particularly in terms of increased learning motivation, authentic vocabulary exposure, and contextual understanding. These findings support existing theories and previous studies that emphasize the importance of meaningful input and learner engagement in vocabulary acquisition.

One of the major findings of this study is that Spotify increased students' motivation to learn vocabulary. Students reported that learning vocabulary through music created a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, which encouraged them to engage more actively with English. This finding aligns with Butar & Katemba (2023) affective filter hypothesis, which suggests that lower anxiety and positive emotions facilitate language acquisition. Similarly Aristia et al. (2025) found that songs can enhance learners' motivation and interest in learning English, particularly in vocabulary instruction. Compared to traditional vocabulary learning methods that often rely on memorization, Spotify allows learners to interact with vocabulary in a more natural and emotionally engaging way.

Another important finding relates to students' perceptions of vocabulary exposure and contextual understanding. Students perceived that listening to English songs on Spotify enabled them to encounter new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, helping them understand word meanings, pronunciation, and usage. This finding supports Ilyas & Kaniadew (2023) assertion that repeated exposure to vocabulary in context is essential for vocabulary acquisition. In addition, Azis et al. (2024) emphasize that vocabulary learning is more effective when words are learned through contextualized language use rather than in isolation. This study extends previous findings by demonstrating that music streaming platforms provide authentic contextual input that students perceive as beneficial for vocabulary mastery.

The findings also highlight the role of digital technology in supporting autonomous and informal learning. Spotify allows students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, which encourages independent learning beyond the classroom. This aligns with Hidayah & Apoko (2025) concept of learner autonomy, which emphasizes learners' control over the learning process. Agustiningrum & Susanti (2025) further argue that technology-enhanced language learning promotes flexibility and learner engagement, both of which were evident in students' positive perceptions of Spotify integration. This suggests that Spotify can function as a bridge between formal classroom learning and informal language exposure.

Despite these positive perceptions, the study also identified several challenges associated with using Spotify for vocabulary learning. Some students

experienced difficulties with fast tempo, unfamiliar accents, and unclear pronunciation. These challenges suggest that authentic audio input may pose comprehension difficulties, particularly for learners with lower proficiency levels. This finding supports Hasaniyah & Suryanto (2025)(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016)(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016)(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016)(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) claim that learners may struggle with authentic listening materials without sufficient linguistic support. Therefore, the use of Spotify should be accompanied by appropriate scaffolding to ensure effective vocabulary learning.

Another challenge identified in this study is the potential for distraction, as students sometimes focused more on the melody than on the vocabulary content. This finding highlights the dual role of music as both an educational resource and a form of entertainment. While music can enhance engagement, it may also divert attention from learning objectives if not carefully managed. Maulidia (2023)(Reinders & White, 2016)(Reinders & White, 2016)(Reinders & White, 2016)(Reinders & White, 2016) emphasize that the effectiveness of digital tools depends on pedagogical integration rather than technology alone. Thus, teachers play a crucial role in guiding students' focus and aligning Spotify-based activities with instructional goals.

Another important aspect revealed by this study is the alignment between students' digital literacy and language learning practices. Students' positive perceptions of Spotify indicate that they are capable of navigating digital platforms independently and using them as learning resources when proper direction is provided. This finding supports the notion that today's learners are digitally oriented and benefit from instructional approaches that incorporate familiar technologies into academic learning. Integrating Spotify into vocabulary learning therefore reflects an adaptive response to students' digital learning preferences.

Additionally, the findings highlight the pedagogical value of integrating authentic materials into vocabulary instruction. Songs available on Spotify represent real language use that exposes students to natural expressions, cultural nuances, and varied linguistic features. This exposure contributes to learners' awareness of how vocabulary is used beyond textbook examples. In this regard, the study reinforces previous arguments that authentic materials play a significant role in developing learners' lexical competence and communicative awareness. By emphasizing students' perceptions, this study strengthens the understanding that authenticity and relevance are key factors in successful technology-assisted vocabulary learning.

In addition to supporting existing theories, this study contributes new insights by emphasizing the importance of students' subjective experiences in evaluating digital learning tools. Previous studies on music and vocabulary learning have largely focused on measurable outcomes such as vocabulary test scores. In contrast, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative perspective to highlight how students perceive and experience Spotify integration in their learning process. This approach enriches the understanding of digital-assisted language learning by foregrounding learners' voices, which are often underrepresented in experimental research.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of Spotify in vocabulary learning is influenced by the selection of learning materials. Songs with clear pronunciation, moderate tempo, and relevant vocabulary were perceived as more beneficial than those with complex lyrics or fast rhythms. This supports the input hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input for language acquisition. Teachers and material designers should therefore consider linguistic complexity and learners' proficiency levels when selecting Spotify content for instructional purposes.

Another important implication of this study relates to curriculum integration. Spotify should not be viewed as a replacement for conventional vocabulary instruction but rather as a supplementary learning tool that complements existing teaching strategies. When integrated thoughtfully into lesson plans, Spotify can enhance vocabulary learning by providing authentic exposure and increasing learner motivation. This finding aligns with blended learning approaches that combine traditional instruction with digital media to create more dynamic learning environments.

Another significant contribution of this study lies in its contextual focus on senior high school learners. At this educational level, students are transitioning toward more independent learning and are increasingly exposed to digital media in their daily lives. The positive perceptions toward Spotify suggest that incorporating familiar digital platforms can support this transition by fostering self-directed vocabulary learning. This finding aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learning is more effective when learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful and relevant experiences. Spotify, when integrated appropriately, enables students to construct vocabulary knowledge through repeated and contextual exposure outside formal classroom instruction.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of aligning technological integration with learners' proficiency levels and learning needs. While Spotify offers abundant authentic input, its effectiveness depends on how well the content matches students' linguistic competence. Songs with overly complex lyrics or fast tempo may limit comprehension and reduce learning effectiveness. This reinforces the argument that pedagogical mediation is essential in technology-assisted learning. Teachers must function as facilitators who curate suitable materials and design tasks that help learners process vocabulary effectively. Thus, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that the pedagogical value of Spotify is not inherent in the platform itself but emerges from thoughtful instructional integration.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on technology-assisted vocabulary learning by focusing on a music streaming platform that is widely used by students in their daily lives. By examining Spotify from a descriptive qualitative perspective, this study highlights its pedagogical potential as well as its limitations. The findings underscore the need for future research to explore long-term impacts, different proficiency levels, and comparative studies with other digital platforms. Overall, the discussion demonstrates that Spotify has the potential to support vocabulary mastery when integrated with appropriate pedagogical strategies and learner-centered approaches

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of using Spotify as a learning medium to enhance vocabulary mastery in an English learning context. The findings indicate that students generally perceive Spotify as a beneficial supplementary tool for vocabulary learning. Learning through music streaming was found to increase students' motivation, provide authentic vocabulary exposure, and support contextual understanding of word meaning, pronunciation, and usage. These findings confirm that integrating familiar digital platforms into language learning can create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience for students.

The study also reveals that the effectiveness of Spotify in vocabulary learning is not without limitations. Challenges such as fast tempo, unfamiliar accents, and potential distraction highlight the need for careful pedagogical planning. These findings suggest that digital media alone cannot guarantee effective learning outcomes unless accompanied by appropriate instructional guidance. Therefore, Spotify should be integrated as a complementary resource rather than a replacement for conventional vocabulary instruction.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances the current body of knowledge in digital-assisted language learning by emphasizing students' subjective experiences and perceptions. Unlike many previous studies that focus primarily on quantitative learning outcomes, this research provides qualitative insights into how learners experience vocabulary learning through music streaming platforms. By foregrounding learners' voices, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of technology integration in vocabulary instruction.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for English teachers and curriculum designers. Teachers are encouraged to select appropriate songs with clear pronunciation and relevant vocabulary, set explicit learning objectives, and provide guided activities to help students focus on vocabulary learning. When used strategically, Spotify can support learner motivation, promote autonomous learning, and enrich classroom instruction through authentic language input.

This study also opens opportunities for future research. Further studies may examine the long-term impact of Spotify-assisted vocabulary learning, compare its effectiveness with other digital platforms, or explore its use across different proficiency levels and educational contexts. Future research employing mixed-method or experimental designs could also complement the qualitative findings of this study. Overall, this research demonstrates that Spotify has the potential to contribute meaningfully to vocabulary learning when integrated thoughtfully within pedagogically sound instructional frameworks.

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