



## **Students' Perceptions of Using Nursery Rhyme Songs in EFL Listening Comprehension at an Indonesian Islamic Junior High School**

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to explore students' perceptions of using nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning at an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, this study was conducted at MTs Negeri Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participants were 33 purposively selected eighth-grade students who had experienced listening activities through nursery rhyme songs as part of their English learning process. Data were collected through an open-ended perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using thematic analysis within a qualitative descriptive framework to identify students' learning experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges. The findings revealed that students generally perceived nursery rhyme songs as a supportive medium for improving their listening learning experiences. Students described that nursery rhyme songs created enjoyable learning environments through melody, rhythm, repetition, and simple language patterns. The findings further indicated several perceived benefits, including increased vocabulary familiarity, pronunciation awareness, learning confidence, and engagement during listening activities. However, students also reported challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation differences, and difficulties in recognizing certain spoken expressions. This study concludes that nursery rhyme songs were perceived as an accessible and motivating listening medium for beginner adolescent EFL learners when supported by appropriate teacher guidance and classroom scaffolding. The study contributes to EFL listening research by addressing the limited understanding of students' subjective experiences toward instructional media, particularly in Indonesian Islamic junior high school contexts where learners' perceptions of song-based listening activities remain underexplored.*

**Keywords:** *EFL Learners, Junior High School, Listening Comprehension, Nursery Rhyme Songs, Students' Perceptions*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Listening comprehension represents one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because it requires learners to process spoken input rapidly while simultaneously recognizing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and contextual meaning (Al-Feky, 2021). Unlike reading activities, where learners can control the pace of input, listening

requires immediate interpretation of transient auditory information (Rukmana et al., 2023). For junior high school learners in Indonesia, these challenges are intensified because English exposure outside the classroom remains relatively limited, while classroom listening activities often depend on textbook-based audio materials that may contain unfamiliar accents, rapid speech rates, and limited contextual support. Consequently, many beginner-level learners experience difficulties in recognizing words, retaining vocabulary, and constructing meaning during listening activities. EFL learners often experience difficulties in recognizing spoken words, processing pronunciation patterns, and interpreting meaning during listening activities (Nur et al., 2023).

One important challenge in EFL listening development concerns vocabulary retention and retrieval. Learners may recognize individual words during instruction but struggle to recall or identify them when the words appear in continuous speech. This difficulty occurs because listening involves not only knowing vocabulary but also accessing lexical knowledge quickly under real-time processing conditions (McLean et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers need instructional media that provide repeated, meaningful, and accessible auditory exposure to support learners' ability to notice, store, and retrieve English words during listening activities.

One alternative medium that has received increasing attention in language education is the use of songs, particularly nursery rhyme songs. Nursery rhyme songs refer to short traditional poems or songs characterized by rhythmic patterns, repetition, simple structures, and memorable melodies (Fitria, 2023). Unlike ordinary listening texts, nursery rhymes combine linguistic input with musical features, allowing learners to encounter vocabulary through repeated pronunciation patterns and predictable sound sequences. For example, songs such as *"The Farmer in the Dell"* or *"Lavender's Blue"* provide repeated exposure to words and phrases through melody and rhythm, which may help learners recognize pronunciation patterns and remember vocabulary more easily. In the context of EFL learning, these characteristics make nursery rhymes potentially useful not only for young children but also for beginner adolescent learners who require supportive auditory input.

Previous studies have explored the pedagogical value of songs and nursery rhymes in English learning; however, their findings indicate different emphases and limitations. In one study, Wulansari & Farijanti (2020) investigated whether nursery rhyme songs could improve junior high school students' listening achievement using a quasi-experimental design. Their findings showed that students exposed to nursery rhymes achieved significantly higher listening scores than those receiving conventional instruction. The study suggested that rhythmic repetition and predictable sound patterns assisted learners in identifying English sounds and processing spoken input. However, the study primarily focused on achievement outcomes and provided limited explanation of how students experienced the learning process.

Similarly, Amini et al. (2025) examined the theoretical and pedagogical potential of nursery rhymes in language learning through a literature-based analysis. They argued that rhythmic and melodic features could reduce learners' anxiety, strengthen phonological awareness, and support memory development. While their study provided important theoretical explanations regarding why

nursery rhymes may facilitate language acquisition, it did not include classroom-based evidence regarding learners' actual responses or perceptions toward this instructional medium.

In contrast, Kusumaningtiyas et al. (2025) explored the implementation of nursery rhyme videos in developing listening comprehension through classroom action research. The study demonstrated that nursery rhyme-based activities supported learner attention, vocabulary development, and classroom interaction through structured pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Nevertheless, the use of animated videos created a multimodal learning environment, making it difficult to determine how students perceive nursery rhymes specifically as an auditory listening resource.

More recently, Putri et al. (2022) investigated students' perceptions, benefits, and challenges of using English songs in listening instruction through a mixed-method design. Their findings indicated that students generally perceived songs positively because they created enjoyable and low-anxiety learning environments. However, the study also identified difficulties related to fast tempo, connected speech, and unfamiliar accents in contemporary songs. These findings highlight an important distinction between general English songs and nursery rhyme songs: while songs can increase motivation, the complexity of musical input may influence students' ability to process spoken English. Nursery rhymes, with slower rhythm, clearer pronunciation, and repeated linguistic patterns, may provide a more accessible alternative for beginner learners.

Collectively, previous research demonstrates that songs and nursery rhymes can facilitate EFL listening development by enhancing learners' motivation, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and emotional engagement. However, existing studies have predominantly focused on measurable learning outcomes, instructional effectiveness, or teachers' perspectives regarding the use of songs in language classrooms. Consequently, limited attention has been given to learners' own perceptions and experiences when engaging with nursery rhyme songs as listening materials, particularly among adolescent EFL learners who differ from young children in terms of cognitive maturity, classroom expectations, and social sensitivity.

This gap is particularly significant in Indonesian Islamic junior high school contexts, where English learning takes place within a specific educational and cultural environment. Although nursery rhymes are commonly associated with early childhood education, their repetitive structures, accessible vocabulary, and rhythmic patterns may provide meaningful support for adolescent learners with beginner-level English proficiency. However, little is known about how these learners perceive the suitability, benefits, and challenges of using nursery rhyme songs for listening comprehension. Therefore, this study explores eighth-grade students' perceptions at MTs Negeri Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, to provide insights into learners' subjective experiences with song-based listening activities.

Addressing this research gap, the present study focuses on students' perspectives as an essential dimension in understanding the pedagogical value of nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening instruction. Rather than examining only learning outcomes or instructional effectiveness, this study seeks to reveal how adolescent learners interpret their experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges when

engaging with nursery rhyme-based listening activities. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of using nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning at an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research question: How do students perceive the use of nursery rhyme songs in learning English listening comprehension at an Indonesian Islamic junior high school?

To address this question, the study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using an open-ended perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to investigate students' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges after participating in nursery rhyme-based listening activities. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged students to describe their feelings, opinions, learning experiences, perceived advantages, and difficulties related to the use of nursery rhyme songs in listening activities. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper explanations of students' responses and clarify their personal experiences. This design allows the study to capture not only students' general perceptions but also the underlying reasons behind their responses.

This study contributes to EFL listening research by shifting attention from measuring only learning outcomes toward understanding learners' subjective experiences with instructional media. The findings provide theoretical insights into the relationship between musical input, learner perception, and listening engagement, while offering practical implications for English teachers seeking accessible and motivating materials for beginner adolescent learners. By examining nursery rhyme songs within an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context, this study expands current discussions on how culturally and pedagogically appropriate listening materials can support students' confidence, vocabulary retention, and participation in EFL classrooms.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **Listening Comprehension in EFL Learning**

Listening comprehension is a crucial but challenging skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because learners must process spoken input in real time while simultaneously recognizing sounds, interpreting linguistic information, and constructing meaning. Unlike written language, spoken English provides limited opportunities for learners to revisit unfamiliar expressions, making listening activities cognitively demanding, particularly for beginner-level learners. Previous studies have highlighted that EFL learners frequently experience difficulties related to limited vocabulary knowledge, unfamiliar pronunciation, speech rate, and insufficient exposure to authentic spoken input (Shehzad et al. 2021; Saito et al. 2023). These challenges indicate that effective listening instruction requires not only strategy development but also appropriate learning materials that can provide comprehensible and engaging auditory input.

In Indonesian EFL contexts, listening comprehension remains one of the skills that requires further instructional attention, especially among junior high school learners who are still developing basic English proficiency. Students at this educational level often encounter difficulties in recognizing spoken words,

connecting sounds with meanings, and maintaining concentration during listening activities due to limited classroom exposure to spoken English. Previous research has reported that Indonesian EFL learners commonly experience listening anxiety, lack of confidence, and difficulties understanding unfamiliar pronunciation and vocabulary when engaging with English listening materials (Le & Sa, 2020; Hsu & Chang, 2025; Surahmat et al. 2026). Therefore, selecting suitable listening materials becomes essential because instructional materials influence not only learners' comprehension but also their motivation, emotional involvement, and willingness to participate in listening activities.

For adolescent learners in Indonesian Islamic junior high schools, these challenges require particular consideration because students are transitioning from early language learning stages while also developing their academic identity and learning confidence. In this context, listening materials that contain accessible linguistic features, repetition, and meaningful patterns may support learners in engaging with spoken English more comfortably. Nursery rhyme songs represent one potential medium because their rhythmic structures, repetitive expressions, and simplified vocabulary can provide comprehensible input for beginner learners. However, while previous studies have examined songs as instructional media, limited research has explored how adolescent learners themselves perceive nursery rhyme songs as listening materials, particularly within Indonesian Islamic junior high school settings. Understanding students' perceptions is therefore important to reveal whether such materials are accepted, beneficial, and challenging from the learners' own perspectives.

### **Nursery Rhyme Songs as Listening Instructional Media**

Songs have increasingly been recognized as valuable resources in foreign language classrooms because they combine linguistic input with rhythm, melody, and repetition. Among different types of songs, nursery rhyme songs have distinctive characteristics that make them potentially suitable for beginner EFL learners. Nursery rhymes are short poetic texts characterized by rhythmic patterns, repetition, and simple linguistic structures (Mello et al., 2022). Olawe (2023) describes nursery rhymes as "sentences set to music," emphasizing that rhythm and rhyme help learners remember language patterns more effectively than ordinary prose.

The pedagogical value of nursery rhymes lies in their ability to provide repeated exposure to language in an enjoyable context. Khoirurrijal (2025) argues that songs support foreign language learning by increasing learners' motivation while simultaneously developing pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills. Similarly, Huang & Chen (2024) highlight that songs create a relaxed and non-threatening classroom atmosphere, allowing learners to receive language input with reduced anxiety.

Nevertheless, previous literature also indicates that the effectiveness of songs depends on the characteristics of the selected materials. Werner (2021) warns that songs do not automatically facilitate language learning because inappropriate song selection or ineffective implementation may reduce their pedagogical benefits. This distinction is important because contemporary English songs may contain complex vocabulary, rapid tempo, and unfamiliar pronunciation patterns, which can create additional difficulties for beginner

learners. In contrast, nursery rhyme songs generally provide slower rhythm, clearer pronunciation, and predictable repetition, making them more accessible for learners with limited English proficiency.

### **Students' Perceptions in Language Learning**

Students' perceptions represent an important dimension in understanding the success of instructional innovations because learners' interpretations influence their engagement, motivation, and responses toward classroom activities. Perception refers to the process through which individuals receive, interpret, and assign meaning to experiences based on sensory information and previous knowledge (Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023). In educational contexts, students' perceptions provide valuable information regarding how learners experience teaching methods and whether they consider learning activities meaningful and supportive.

(Gençoglu et al., 2022) argue that students' perceptions influence learning processes because learners actively interpret classroom experiences rather than simply receive information. Therefore, investigating students' perceptions of nursery rhyme songs provides insight beyond measurable achievement outcomes. While quantitative improvement can indicate whether an instructional method produces academic gains, students' perceptions explain why the method may or may not be accepted by learners.

In the context of EFL listening instruction, students' perceptions are closely related to affective factors such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, and classroom participation. When students perceive listening activities as enjoyable and manageable, they are more likely to engage actively with the learning process. Conversely, negative perceptions may reduce participation even when instructional materials are theoretically beneficial.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

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### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of using nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension at an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to understand students' experiences, opinions, perceived benefits, and challenges after participating in nursery rhyme-based listening activities (Marsela et al., 2024). The study did not aim to measure learning outcomes or test the effectiveness of nursery rhyme songs; rather, it aimed to describe students' subjective experiences and interpretations of the learning process.

The qualitative design was considered appropriate because students' perceptions represent subjective interpretations of learning experiences that cannot be fully captured through numerical measurement (Zakly et al., 2025). Through this approach, the study investigated how students perceived the use of nursery rhyme songs in relation to their listening engagement, comprehension process, motivation, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary development, and difficulties encountered during learning activities.

### **Research Context and Participants**

The study was conducted at MTs Negeri Parepare, an Islamic junior high school located in Parepare City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The school context was selected because students were learning English as a foreign language and encountered challenges in listening comprehension, particularly related to limited exposure to spoken English and difficulties in processing unfamiliar vocabulary and pronunciation.

The participants were eighth-grade students who experienced English listening instruction through nursery rhyme songs. The participants consisted of 33 students from class VIII.5 who had participated in listening activities using nursery rhyme songs as part of their English learning experience. The students were selected purposively because they had direct experience with the instructional approach being investigated. The students' experiences were considered valuable for understanding how adolescent EFL learners perceived the use of nursery rhyme songs, including their perceived benefits, engagement, and challenges during listening activities.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Two instruments were used to collect qualitative data: a perception questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

#### **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was administered to explore students' perceptions of learning listening comprehension through nursery rhyme songs. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions designed to allow students to describe their personal experiences, opinions, perceived benefits, and challenges related to the use of nursery rhyme songs in listening activities. Unlike structured-response questionnaires, the open-ended format enabled students to provide detailed explanations based on their own learning experiences and perceptions. Therefore, the questionnaire was used as a qualitative elicitation tool rather than as a quantitative measurement instrument.

The questionnaire questions were developed based on four listening dimensions proposed by Brown (2003): intensive listening, responsive listening, selective listening, and extensive listening. The questions explored students' experiences in recognizing sounds, understanding spoken information, identifying specific details, and comprehending overall meanings from nursery rhyme songs. In addition, the questions addressed students' engagement, motivation, vocabulary development, pronunciation awareness, and difficulties encountered during the listening activities.

The questionnaire was distributed after students completed the nursery rhyme-based listening activities. The responses were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis by identifying recurring ideas, categorizing students' experiences, and developing themes related to the perceived benefits, learning experiences, and challenges associated with the use of nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning.

#### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper explanations of students' responses from the open-ended questionnaire. Interviews were selected

because they allowed students to describe their personal experiences, feelings, and difficulties in their own words. Several students from class VIII.5 were purposively selected as interview participants to represent diverse learning experiences related to nursery rhyme-based listening activities. The interview questions focused on students' experiences during the listening activities, perceived benefits, difficulties in understanding nursery rhyme songs, and how these activities influenced their listening comprehension process. The interviews were conducted individually and recorded with participants' permission. The interview data were subsequently transcribed verbatim before being analyzed.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures. The analysis followed an inductive process involving several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, categorization of meaningful responses, and identification of emerging themes. First, questionnaire responses were examined to identify recurring ideas related to students' experiences, perceived benefits, engagement, and challenges in learning listening comprehension through nursery rhyme songs. The interview transcripts were analyzed alongside questionnaire responses to obtain deeper interpretations of students' perceptions and to develop comprehensive themes representing their learning experiences. This approach is consistent with qualitative descriptive research, which aims to provide a rich and straightforward description of participants' perspectives based on their own accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Second, interview transcripts were analyzed thematically following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. The analysis involved several stages, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, grouping similar codes into categories, developing and reviewing emerging themes, and interpreting the relationship between themes and the research focus. This process enabled the researchers to identify patterns of meaning in students' accounts and develop themes representing their perceptions, experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges related to the use of nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning.

The themes were developed based on recurring patterns related to students' perceptions of nursery rhyme songs in listening learning. The analysis focused on four major areas: (1) students' motivation and classroom atmosphere, (2) pronunciation and phonological awareness, (3) vocabulary learning and memory retention, and (4) challenges encountered during listening activities.

The integration of questionnaire and interview findings was conducted through method triangulation to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions. Method triangulation involves the use of multiple data collection methods to examine the same phenomenon and enhance the credibility and depth of qualitative findings (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). In this study, the open-ended questionnaire provided initial descriptions of students' perceptions, while the semi-structured interviews provided deeper explanations regarding students' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges. The comparison and integration of findings from both sources helped develop a more complete

interpretation of students' perceptions toward the use of nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Students' Positive Perceptions toward the Use of Nursery Rhyme Songs

The findings from the open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed that students generally perceived nursery rhyme songs positively in EFL listening comprehension learning. The questionnaire responses indicated that students associated nursery rhyme songs with enjoyable and engaging listening experiences, while the interview data provided deeper explanations of why students developed these positive perceptions. Students described nursery rhyme songs as interesting and helpful learning resources that created a different experience from conventional listening activities. They explained that the combination of melody, rhythm, and repeated language patterns made listening activities more accessible and encouraged them to participate actively during classroom activities.

The interview data further showed that students appreciated the opportunity to listen to English through a more enjoyable medium. Rather than experiencing listening activities as difficult tasks, students perceived nursery rhyme songs as a supportive way to engage with spoken English. One student stated:

*"Learning listening through songs was more interesting because I could listen repeatedly and follow the rhythm of the song."*

Another student explained:

*"The song made listening activities feel easier because the words were repeated several times."*

These findings indicate that students' positive perceptions were associated with the characteristics of nursery rhyme songs, particularly repetition, rhythm, and simplicity of language. The repeated exposure provided students with opportunities to become familiar with English sounds and expressions.

This finding supports previous studies suggesting that songs can create meaningful and enjoyable language learning experiences. Babayev (2025) argued that songs provide repeated language exposure while increasing learners' motivation. Similarly, Lund (2023) highlighted that songs can create a relaxed classroom atmosphere that encourages learner participation. However, the present study extends previous research by focusing specifically on adolescent EFL learners' perceptions of nursery rhyme songs, rather than only examining young learners or learning outcomes.

### Students' Experiences of Learning Listening through Nursery Rhyme Songs

The interview findings demonstrated that nursery rhyme songs shaped students' experiences during listening activities by increasing their engagement and reducing feelings of difficulty during listening tasks. Students explained that the use of rhythm, repetition, and simple lyrics helped them interact with English input more comfortably. For example, one student stated, *"I enjoyed listening to the song because I could follow the rhythm and listen to the words several times until I understood them."* Another student explained, *"Before using songs,*

*listening was difficult, but with nursery rhyme songs I felt more confident because the words were repeated."*

The students' responses indicated that repeated exposure through nursery rhyme songs helped them gradually recognize English sounds, vocabulary, and expressions. The open-ended questionnaire responses also reflected similar perceptions, with students describing the activities as "more enjoyable," "easier to follow," and "less stressful" compared with conventional listening exercises. These findings suggest that nursery rhyme songs not only functioned as listening materials but also created a supportive learning environment where students felt more comfortable engaging with spoken English.

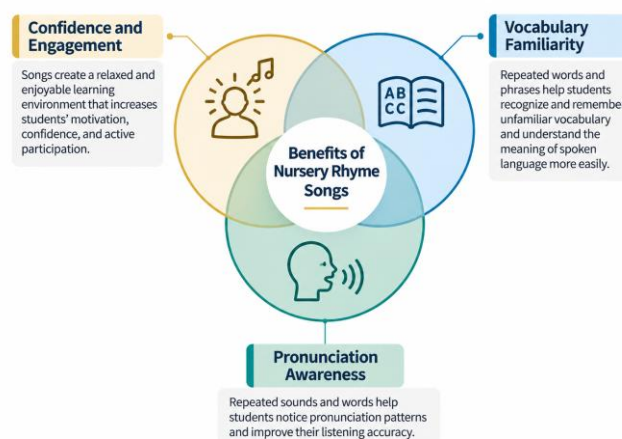
This finding can be understood through the perspective of affective factors in language learning. Shen & Wu (2026) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that emotional conditions such as anxiety and confidence influence learners' ability to process language input. In this study, students' positive experiences indicated that nursery rhyme songs created a more supportive emotional environment for engaging with English listening materials.

The finding is also consistent with (Ananda, 2023), who reported that students perceived English songs as enjoyable listening media that created a positive learning atmosphere. However, unlike general English songs that may contain complex vocabulary and faster pronunciation, nursery rhyme songs provided simpler linguistic patterns that were considered more suitable for beginner-level learners.

### **Students' Perceived Learning Experiences through Nursery Rhyme Songs**

The findings from the open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews showed that students perceived several benefits from using nursery rhyme songs in listening comprehension activities. The questionnaire responses indicated that students associated nursery rhyme songs with improved vocabulary familiarity, pronunciation awareness, and greater confidence during listening activities. These perceptions were further supported by interview data, in which students explained how repeated exposure to songs helped them recognize English words and understand spoken expressions more easily. One student stated, *"The song helped me remember new words because I heard the words repeatedly."* Another student explained, *"I became more confident because I could follow the pronunciation through the song."* These responses demonstrate that students perceived nursery rhyme songs not only as enjoyable learning materials but also as supportive resources for developing their listening experiences.

These perceived benefits were mainly related to vocabulary familiarity, pronunciation awareness, confidence, and enjoyment during learning.



**Figure 1.** Perceived Benefits of Nursery Rhyme Songs in Listening Learning

### Vocabulary Familiarity and Retention

Students perceived that nursery rhyme songs supported vocabulary familiarity and retention during listening comprehension activities. The findings from the open-ended questionnaire indicated that several students considered repeated words and phrases in nursery rhyme songs helpful for recognizing and remembering unfamiliar English vocabulary. These perceptions were further supported by the interview data, where students explained that repeated exposure to the same words allowed them to gradually become familiar with their pronunciation and meanings.

One student stated, *"When the same words appeared many times in the song, I could remember their meanings more easily."* Another student explained, *"I remembered new words because I heard them repeatedly in the song, so I could recognize them when listening again."* These responses demonstrate that repetition was a key feature influencing students' perceptions of vocabulary learning through nursery rhyme songs.

The finding suggests that repeated exposure provided students with opportunities to notice specific lexical items and establish connections between spoken forms and meanings. Rather than directly measuring vocabulary improvement, this study highlights students' perceived experiences of becoming more familiar with English words through repeated listening activities. This finding corresponds with vocabulary learning principles emphasizing the importance of repeated encounters with lexical items, which contribute to vocabulary recognition and retention (Nguyen et al., 2023). However, the present study extends previous research by illustrating how adolescent beginner-level EFL learners perceive vocabulary-related benefits of nursery rhyme songs within an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context.

### Pronunciation Awareness

Students also perceived nursery rhyme songs as useful for becoming familiar with English pronunciation. They explained that listening to repeated sounds and words helped them notice pronunciation patterns and imitate the way words were spoken. A participant stated: *"I could follow the pronunciation because the singer repeated the words clearly."*

The students' responses indicate that nursery rhyme songs functioned as accessible auditory input that allowed learners to pay attention to English sounds. This finding supports Fhadilla et al. (2025) argument that nursery rhymes combine language and rhythm, making linguistic patterns easier to notice and remember. Nevertheless, the findings represent students' perceptions of pronunciation awareness rather than evidence of measurable pronunciation improvement.

### **Confidence and Enjoyment in Listening Activities**

Another recurring theme identified from the open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was students' increased confidence and enjoyment during listening activities. Students reported that nursery rhyme songs created a more comfortable learning atmosphere because they could listen to English through familiar rhythms and repeated expressions. Several students explained that repeated listening opportunities reduced their anxiety and encouraged them to participate more actively during listening activities.

One student stated, *"I felt more confident because I could listen to the song several times until I understood the words."* Another student explained, *"Learning listening through songs was more enjoyable because I was not afraid of making mistakes when trying to follow the pronunciation."* These responses indicate that students perceived nursery rhyme songs as less intimidating than conventional listening activities because the repetitive and enjoyable features of songs allowed them to engage with English input at their own pace.

The open-ended questionnaire responses reflected similar perceptions, with students describing nursery rhyme songs as "more interesting," "fun," and "easier to follow." These responses suggest that enjoyment was not only related to entertainment but also contributed to students' willingness to participate in listening activities and attempt to understand spoken English.

This finding supports Ejeng et al. (2020), who emphasized that songs can create a relaxed learning environment that reduces emotional barriers in language learning. However, the present study extends previous research by showing how adolescent EFL learners perceived nursery rhyme songs as supportive listening materials that increased their confidence and engagement within an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context.

Overall, the findings from the questionnaire and interviews demonstrated that students associated nursery rhyme songs with several positive learning experiences, including enjoyment, engagement, vocabulary familiarity, pronunciation awareness, and increased confidence. Nevertheless, students also reported challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary and difficulties recognizing certain spoken expressions. These findings suggest that nursery rhyme songs can provide accessible listening experiences for beginner adolescent EFL learners when supported by appropriate teacher scaffolding and instructional guidance.

The contribution of this study lies in revealing adolescent learners' perspectives toward nursery rhyme songs as listening instructional media. Rather than focusing only on measurable learning outcomes, this study highlights how students interpret, experience, and respond to song-based listening activities within an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of using nursery rhyme songs in EFL listening comprehension learning at an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. The findings indicated that students perceived nursery rhyme songs positively as a supportive medium for listening activities. Students' accounts revealed that the combination of rhythm, melody, repetition, and simple language patterns contributed to more engaging and comfortable listening experiences. Through these experiences, students perceived several benefits, including greater vocabulary familiarity, increased pronunciation awareness, and greater confidence when engaging with spoken English. Nevertheless, students also identified challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation differences, and difficulties in recognizing certain spoken expressions, indicating that the effectiveness of nursery rhyme songs depends on appropriate teacher guidance and classroom scaffolding.

This study contributes to EFL listening research by emphasizing the importance of understanding learners' subjective experiences when introducing instructional media. While previous studies have frequently focused on learning outcomes or the general effectiveness of songs in language classrooms, this study highlights how adolescent learners interpret, accept, and experience nursery rhyme songs as listening materials within an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context. This study contributes by showing that nursery rhyme songs should not only be considered as children's materials but also as accessible listening resources for adolescent beginner EFL learners. The findings suggest that students' perceptions should be considered as an important aspect in designing meaningful listening instruction, particularly for beginner-level EFL learners.

Future research may extend these findings by investigating the perspectives of teachers, comparing different educational contexts, or examining how specific features of nursery rhyme songs influence various aspects of language learning through longitudinal or comparative research designs.

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