JURNAL MUDABBIR

(Journal Research and Education Studies)

Volume 5 Nomor 2 Tahun 2025

http://jurnal.permapendis-sumut.org/index.php/mudabbir **ISSN: 2774-8391**

Utilizing Spotify as a Tool for Phonology Learning in English Language Education

Hanny Sarah Siregar[1], Nabila Putri Azmy[2], Raja Farhan Ansory Nasution[3], Yani Lubis[4]

[1,2,3,4] Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Email: hanny0304231001@uinsu.ac.id[1], nabila0304232027@uinsu.ac.id[2]
raja0304233096@uinsu.ac.id[3], yanilubis@uinsu.ac.id[4]

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of Spotify as a digital learning tool to support the development of phonological competence among students in English Language Education. As an increasingly popular platform among youth, Spotify offers not only musical content but also podcasts and speech-based audio materials that can be integrated into language learning strategies, particularly in phonology. Drawing from multiple previous studies, this research highlights that the use of Spotify especially through English songs with clear lyrics can enhance students' pronunciation, listening comprehension, rhythm awareness, and their understanding of phonemes such as /θ/, /ʃ/, and /ð/, which are often difficult for EFL learners. Using a qualitative method involving student perceptions collected via questionnaires and focus group discussions, the study reveals that Spotify contributes to informal yet effective learning. Students report higher motivation and engagement due to the accessibility and emotional resonance of music-based learning. Unlike rigid textbook approaches, Spotify allows for repetitive, contextualized input that supports pronunciation mastery in a relaxed and personalized manner. In addition, the integration of digital tools like Spotify aligns with students' daily habits, making phonological learning more practical and less intimidating. Although some studies show that Spotify may not always outperform traditional classroom instruction in terms of measurable pronunciation scores, its strength lies in improving learner autonomy, fostering a positive attitude toward language exposure, and making phonological learning more enjoyable. Therefore, Spotify is considered a promising supplementary resource for English phonology instruction in higher education settings.

Keywords: *Spotify; phonology learning; English pronunciation; digital audio platform; EFL students; autonomous learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, technological advancements have deeply transformed the landscape of education, especially in the field of language learning. Digital platforms are no longer solely for entertainment; they are now seen as pedagogical tools that enhance student's engagement, autonomy, and accessibility to authentic language input. One such platform is Spotify, a globally recognized audio streaming service that provides users with a wide range of content including music, podcasts, spoken word, and more. While initially intended for entertainment, Spotify has demonstrated increasing potential as an informal yet effective tool for language education particularly in supporting learner's pronunciation and phonological awareness (Mallisa & Mbato, 2023; Shafwati et al., 2023; Lubis, 2022).

Phonology, the branch of linguistics concerned with the systematic organization of sounds, is a vital component in English language learning. However, it remains one of the most abstract and challenging areas for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts such as Indonesia. Indonesian students often face difficulties in accurately producing certain English phonemes, such as the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ in think, or the voiced postalveolar fricative /ʒ/ in measure, due to the absence of these sounds in their first language. This discrepancy frequently leads to mispronunciations, miscommunication, and reduced confidence in spoken English (Putri et al., 2025; Kobilova, 2022; Susanthi, 2020). Traditional methods of teaching pronunciation in Indonesia tend to be teacher-centered and textbook-based, which often fail to provide sufficient exposure to natural speech and lack opportunities for repeated auditory reinforcement. In contrast, digital audio platforms such as Spotify allow learners to listen repeatedly to authentic materials in a relaxed, familiar, and self-directed environment.

According to Putra et al. (2024), when students engage with English songs through Spotify, they not only improve their pronunciation but also develop greater confidence and interest in phonology learning. Furthermore, Mallisa & Mbato (2023) found that 75% of their participants preferred Spotify over traditional vocabulary tools because of its immersive, emotionally engaging, and context-rich content. Research has also shown that learning pronunciation requires both receptive and productive stages (Frankel, 1984). In the receptive phase, students absorb patterns of stress, intonation, and articulation through listening. Spotify fits perfectly into this phase by offering consistent and authentic input. Once students internalize these patterns, they move into the productive phase, where they begin to speak and reproduce the sounds. Spotify's integration of lyrics, repetition, and audio-text synchronization (through features like "Behind the Lyrics") further enhances learner's ability to recognize and reproduce phonological elements (Ilyas & Kaniadewi, 2023). Moreover, Spotify accommodates informal learning that aligns with student's daily routines. Unlike rigid academic formats, Spotify allows students to engage with English pronunciation while commuting, relaxing, or

multitasking. This ambient learning approach increases language exposure without cognitive overload, making it more accessible and sustainable in the long term. In addition, Spotify fosters learner autonomy by enabling users to choose materials based on their personal interests, which is crucial for maintaining motivation (Purba et al., 2023).

Although previous research has indicated varying degrees of effectiveness, the overall evidence suggests that Spotify offers a complementary role to formal classroom instruction. For instance, while Putri et al. (2025) found that Spotify did not outperform traditional methods in measurable outcomes, they acknowledged its role in improving student interest and participation. Hence, integrating Spotify into phonology instruction offers a promising, student-friendly alternative that supports both skill development and learner motivation. This study, therefore, aims to examine the effectiveness of Spotify as a supplementary tool for learning English phonology. Specifically, it explores student's perceptions and experiences with using Spotify for enhancing their pronunciation skills, with an emphasis on how auditory repetition, musical context, and emotional engagement contribute to learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate student's perceptions of Spotify as a learning tool for English phonology. A descriptive approach was selected to allow the researchers to systematically explore trends, attitudes, and behaviors related to student's experiences in using digital media particularly Spotify for pronunciation and phonological awareness improvement. The study also incorporated qualitative data through interviews to strengthen the interpretation of results and support a more comprehensive understanding.

Participants in this study consisted of seven undergraduate students from various universities in Indonesia, including Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Universitas Negeri Medan, Universitas Syiah Kuala, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara. Most of the respondents were in their fourth semester and majoring in English Language Education, with one participant from the Indonesian Literature program. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, targeting students who had prior experience using Spotify as part of their English learning process.

The primary data collection instrument was a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire contained five closed-ended items using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." These items were designed to assess student's perceptions of Spotify's role in improving listening skills, pronunciation accuracy, learning motivation, and the usefulness of specific Spotify features such as real-time lyrics, repetition, and native speaker input. To complement the survey data, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the same participants.

These interviews provided deeper insights into student experiences, including their listening habits, pronunciation practices, and personal reflections on Spotify's role in their language learning journey.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with percentage calculations applied to each response item to identify general trends. Graphs and charts generated by Google Forms were used to visualize student responses. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically by identifying recurring ideas and opinions, which were then interpreted in relation to the survey results. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this study aimed to offer a richer, more triangulated understanding of how Spotify can support phonological learning in EFL contexts.

RESEARCH FINDING

The results of this study are based on the responses of seven university students majoring in English Education, who were surveyed using a Likert-scale questionnaire and interviewed to capture deeper insights. The data revealed consistent patterns regarding Spotify's influence on student's phonological learning experiences. These findings are presented below according to the themes derived from the interview questions.

1. Do you think Spotify helps you improve your English pronunciation and listening skills?

All participants agreed that Spotify enhances their listening and pronunciation abilities. This supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of comprehensible input in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Spotify provides authentic audio materials such as songs and podcasts that supply rich phonological input for EFL learners.

"Spotify is very helpful in knowing the correct pronunciation of English words through music we hear," said one respondent. This also aligns with Frankel's model of pronunciation acquisition, which highlights listening as the foundation for phonological awareness (Frankel, 1984).

2. How often do you use Spotify as a learning tool in your English study?

Approximately 85.8% of respondents reported using Spotify regularly as part of their English learning activities. Frequent, repeated listening plays a significant role in improving pronunciation and rhythm recognition. This is consistent with the findings of Reinders & Benson (2017), who highlight the benefits of informal, autonomous digital learning. Moreover, Spotify's repeat function supports deliberate practice, allowing

learners to rehearse pronunciation repeatedly until mastery is achieved (Ericsson et al., 1993).

3. Do you think Spotify provides content that supports English phonology learning (e.g., pronunciation, stress, intonation)?

Most participants believed that Spotify content was appropriate and beneficial for phonology learning. This finding is in line with Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which argues that engaging and contextually rich materials support effective learning without overloading cognitive processing (Sweller, 1988). Furthermore, Spotify's contextualized audio resources reflect real-life usage, aligning with the communicative approach to phonology learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

4. Is learning phonology through Spotify more interesting than traditional methods (e.g., textbooks)?

All respondents stated that Spotify offers a more enjoyable and less monotonous alternative to traditional textbook-based learning. This observation supports Engagement Theory, which asserts that students learn better when tasks are personally meaningful and technology is used to foster interaction and interest (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). Similar findings were reported by Mallisa & Mbato (2023), who found that students preferred music-based platforms over rigid, structured methods.

5. Do you feel more confident in your pronunciation after using Spotify regularly?

Although 57.2% of students reported increased confidence in their pronunciation, others expressed neutral responses. This variability is explained by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that self-efficacy increases through mastery experiences and active engagement (Bandura, 1986). Students who engage in active listening strategies such as mimicking and shadowing tend to benefit more than those who consume content passively.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight Spotify's potential as an effective tool to support phonological learning in EFL contexts. Students' strong agreement on Spotify's usefulness in improving their pronunciation and listening skills demonstrates the platform's value as a source of comprehensible and authentic input, consistent with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985). The high percentage of students who actively use Spotify reflects the increasing role of informal, self-directed learning, as emphasized by Reinders and Benson (2017), where digital platforms support language acquisition beyond the classroom.

Participants also noted that features such as real-time lyrics, repeat mode, and access to native pronunciation were particularly helpful in reinforcing their

understanding of English phonemes. This aligns with Frankel's (1984) model, which positions the receptive stage exposure to correct pronunciation as fundamental in building phonological competence. These features also support deliberate practice theory (Ericsson et al., 1993), enabling learners to listen and repeat until they internalize the sound patterns.

Moreover, the use of Spotify was perceived to be more engaging and enjoyable than traditional phonology instruction. This reinforces the premise of Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998), which posits that learners are more motivated when the learning environment is interactive and personally meaningful. The emotionally resonant and familiar context of music helps reduce students' anxiety and increase willingness to participate, as also noted by Mallisa and Mbato (2023).

Students differing levels of pronunciation confidence reflect the role of learner behavior in determining outcomes. While some reported improved confidence, others remained neutral likely due to differences in active versus passive listening. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), self-efficacy in language learning is strengthened through mastery experiences, which occur when learners actively engage in tasks that challenge their skills. Thus, students who practiced shadowing and mimicking pronunciation were more likely to report benefits than those who simply listened for entertainment.

The suitability of Spotify content for phonological learning is also supported by Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), which suggests that learning is most effective when cognitive demands are balanced with engaging, structured input. Music's rhythmic and repetitive nature facilitates retention of stress, intonation, and segmental phonemes, thereby making phonology more accessible to learners.

In addition, the variety of Spotify content from slow ballads to fast-paced rap exposes students to diverse pronunciation styles and phonological patterns, broadening their awareness of different English accents and speech styles (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Podcasts such as The English We Speak or BBC Learning English further reinforce this benefit by providing contextualized spoken English in real-world use.

Altogether, these findings underscore Spotify's value not only as an enjoyable learning tool but also as a pedagogically sound medium for developing phonological skills. While formal instruction remains essential, Spotify enhances language exposure, promotes learner autonomy, and supports pronunciation learning in a way that aligns with modern students' lifestyles and preferences (Putri & Suhartono, 2025; Lubis, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of Spotify as a digital tool to support phonology learning in English language education. Based on relevant theories and supported by student responses, Spotify was found to enhance pronunciation, intonation, and listening skills through features like real-time lyrics, repetition, and native speaker input.

Students showed strong engagement and motivation when learning phonology through Spotify, preferring it over traditional methods. However, the effectiveness depends on how actively the platform is used active listeners benefit more than passive ones.

Overall, Spotify offers a practical and enjoyable supplement to formal phonology instruction, encouraging learner autonomy and increasing exposure to authentic English input.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Prentice-Hall.

Briliant Mallisa, A., & Mbato, C. L. (2023). Digital music platforms in EFL classrooms: Motivation, engagement, and pronunciation. LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 26(1), 55–72.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Ericsson, K. A., Krampe, R. T., & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. Psychological Review, 100(3), 363–406.

Frankel, M. (1984). Teaching pronunciation: A practical approach. TESOL Quarterly, 18(1), 95–107.

Hasibuan, R., & Hutabarat, S. (2023). Phonological awareness among Indonesian EFL learners: Problems and pedagogical solutions. English Language Teaching and Research Journal, 5(2), 34–46.

Ilyas, M., & Kaniadewi, D. (2023). Leveraging Spotify for phonological awareness: From music to mastery. Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 10(1), 45–56.

Kearsley, G., & Shneiderman, B. (1998). Engagement theory: A framework for technology-based teaching and learning. Educational Technology, 38(5), 20–23.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. Longman.

Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. Archives of Psychology, 140, 1–55.

Lubis, Y. (2022). Integrating music-based platforms in phonological instruction: An Indonesian EFL perspective. Journal of Language Innovation, 8(2), 100–115.

Marshall, A. (2015). Using Spotify in the classroom: Unlimited music access for learning and motivation. Language Learning Today Journal, 4(2), 98–103.

Pasaribu, T. A., & Siregar, M. A. (2024). Students' strategies in identifying syllables in English words. International Journal of English Education and Linguistics, 6(3), 77–91.

Putri, A. M., & Suhartono, L. (2025). The use of music streaming platforms in developing English pronunciation. ELT Journal of Research and Development, 10(2), 112–127.

Reinders, H., & Benson, P. (2017). Research agenda: Language learning beyond the classroom. Language Teaching, 50(4), 561–578.

Sari, R. N., Widodo, P. H., & Putri, N. A. (2024). Enhancing EFL students' pronunciation through Spotify-based listening activities. Journal of English Language Teaching Innovations, 8(1), 45–59.

Sugiyono. (2017). Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D. Alfabeta.

Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. Cognitive Science, 12(2), 257–285.