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| **Task-Based Language Teaching through Songs in Indonesian Secondary Schools**  <https://doi.org/10.30598/tahurivol21issue2page120-136>  **Syaima Lailatul Mubarokah1, Afdhal2**  1State University of Jakarta, Jalan Rawamangun Muka Raya No.11, Jakarta 13220, Indonesia  2University of Pattimura, Jalan Ir. M. Putuhena, Ambon 97233, Indonesia | |
| ***Abstract*** | **Article Info:** |
| *This article examines the implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in early English language learning during the Covid-19 pandemic by integrating the Motivation–Action–Reward framework. The study addresses the pedagogical challenges caused by the abrupt transition to online learning, which often reduces children’s motivation, engagement, and vocabulary acquisition. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a mini classroom ethnography approach, the research involved 15 children aged 5–6 years at TK Kristen Caritas Ambon. Data were collected through participant observation, documentation (photos, videos, anecdotal records), and informal interviews with teachers and parents. Thematic coding, language development assessments aligned with the Indonesian early childhood curriculum, and data triangulation were applied for analysis. The findings reveal that integrating Motivation–Action–Reward within TPR sustains children’s enthusiasm, enhances participation, and supports early language development, particularly in mastering basic vocabulary such as prepositions of place. Children responded positively to physical instructions, enjoyed online Zoom activities, and experienced intrinsic satisfaction from simple verbal rewards. The study’s novelty lies in systematically integrating TPR with a motivational framework for young learners in eastern Indonesia, a context rarely explored in international scholarship. The research contributes to education, linguistics, and language studies by expanding adaptive movement-based pedagogies for distance learning, enriching second language acquisition research for early EFL learners, and providing practical recommendations for teachers and policymakers.* | ***Keywords****: Affective Filter, Classroom Interaction, Creative Pedagogy, EFL Context, Task-Based Language Teaching*  ***Correspondence E-Mail:***  [syaimamubarok21@gmail.com](mailto:risnawatiris@gmail.com)  ***Received manuscript****: 10/01/2024*  ***Final revision****: 20/03/2024*  ***Approved****: 28/03/2024*  ***Online Access****: 05/08/2024*  ***Published****: 25/08/2024*  *Copyright © by the Authors*    ***Publisher:*** *Jurusan Bahasa dan Seni FKIP Universitas Pattimura, Jl. Ir. M. Putuhena, Kampus Universitas Pattimura, Poka, Ambon 97233*  ***E-mail:***  [*tahuri.journal@mail.unpatti.ac.id*](mailto:tahuri.journal@mail.unpatti.ac.id)    **This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 CC-BY International license** |
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# **INTRODUCTION**

English language teaching in Indonesia, particularly at the junior high school level, continues to face fundamental challenges related to the pedagogical approaches used in classrooms. In many schools, teaching and learning processes remain dominated by conventional methods such as the grammar–translation method and written exercises focusing on grammatical structures and text translation (Liu et al., 2021; Palanisamy & Rajasekaran, 2024). Although these methods are effective for introducing linguistic rules, they often fail to foster communicative competence, the core goal of language learning. Students tend to perceive language as a set of rules to be memorized rather than as a tool for communication and self-expression. Consequently, listening and speaking skills, two essential components of real-life communication, often lag behind. This phenomenon is also evident in several junior high schools in Jakarta, including SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta, where this study was conducted. Students demonstrate relatively good reading and writing abilities, yet when asked to engage in dialogues or comprehend spoken English, they tend to be passive and lack confidence.

In recent years, various communicative approaches have been introduced to address these challenges. One prominent model is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which places communicative tasks at the core of the learning process (Branden & Gorp, 2021; Hasnain & Halder, 2023; Xu & Fan, 2022). TBLT is grounded in the assumption that language is learned more effectively when it is used to accomplish meaningful tasks rather than merely through explanations of formal structures. Lee and Fanguy (2022) and Peng and Pyper (2021) assert that TBLT encourages students to use language as a means of achieving specific goals, such as problem-solving or expressing opinions. Al-khresheh (2024) and Fuad et al. (2022) further explain that task-based learning integrates all four language skills while providing opportunities for contextual and authentic learning. However, within the Indonesian context, TBLT implementation often encounters practical constraints, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, and teachers’ limited creativity in designing engaging tasks.

Previous studies have demonstrated the considerable potential of TBLT in improving students’ language competence. Bin-Hady et al. (2023) and Stecuła and Wolniak (2022) emphasize that this approach effectively develops communicative ability across various EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. da Costa and Rose (2024) and Rose et al. (2021) found that in Hong Kong, TBLT helps students understand language functionally, although it requires adaptation to local learning cultures. In South Korea, Miranda et al. (2021) and Tan (2023) report that TBLT enhances students’ active participation in classroom interactions. Similarly, Alakrash and Razak (2021) and Sharadgah and Sa’di (2022) show that TBLT can be flexibly applied in Southeast Asian countries, provided teachers can align tasks with students’ interests and needs. Yet, these studies also note that successful TBLT implementation demands teachers’ readiness to serve not merely as knowledge transmitters but as facilitators who can stimulate authentic communication in the classroom.

In Indonesia, studies on TBLT remain relatively limited and tend to focus on curriculum design or quantitative learning outcomes. For instance, research by Hidayati and Santiana (2020) and Sarah (2022) shows that TBLT improves English learning outcomes in public junior high schools in Yogyakarta but lacks in-depth exploration of students’ learning experiences. Studies by Hukubun et al. (2022) and Manuputty (2022) highlight that most teachers still have an incomplete understanding of TBLT’s fundamental principles, leading to classroom practices that imitate task formats without emphasizing genuine communicative purposes. Research by Souisa et al. (2020) and Wenno et al. (2021) further reveals that although teachers claim to adopt communicative approaches, their practices remain grammar-oriented. This indicates a persistent gap between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities.

Meanwhile, several studies suggest that integrating authentic media can enhance the effectiveness of TBLT. Songs, for instance, have been recognized as one of the most engaging media in language learning. Kadir (2021) and Pratama (2022) state that songs improve vocabulary retention and grammatical awareness due to their repetitive and enjoyable nature. Dewi (2021) and Sahib et al. (2021) found that students who learn through songs show significantly better word comprehension compared to those who learn through standard texts. Research by Pharamita et al. (2021) and Sahib et al. (2021) indicates that songs increase students’ intrinsic motivation in learning English. In the Indonesian context, Sihombing and Rani (2023) and Susanti et al. (2024) found that songs play a vital role in reducing the affective filter, emotional barriers such as anxiety or fear of making mistakes, that often inhibit students’ speaking performance. Songs create a relaxed, contextual atmosphere that connects language learning with cultural expressions familiar to students’ lives.

Furthermore, some studies have attempted to combine songs with the TBLT framework. Mali (2023) and Nanda and Azmy (2020) show that song-based tasks enhance students’ speaking skills through activities such as completing lyrics, discussing song content, and creating personal interpretations. In other studies, Hamiddin and Saukah (2020) and Mubarok and Budiono (2022) report that the combination of TBLT and songs contributes to improved vocabulary acquisition and listening skills. Nevertheless, most of these studies remain experimental, focusing on test results rather than classroom dynamics and lived learning experiences. As Munandar and Newton (2021) argue, the success of TBLT should not be assessed solely by academic achievement but also by the degree of students’ engagement and the meaningfulness they derive from the learning process.

Moreover, few studies have explored how teachers creatively adapt the TBLT framework to real classroom conditions in Indonesia, which are often characterized by large class sizes, limited instructional time, and diverse student abilities. de Winter (2024) and Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021) emphasize the importance of contextual adaptation in language teaching, as each classroom has its own social and cultural dynamics. Within this context, using popular songs as a learning medium functions not merely as an instructional aid but as an adaptive strategy that bridges TBLT principles with local pedagogical realities. Songs serve as authentic texts that not only present language in its natural context but also build emotional connections between students and learning materials.

In reality, studies positioning songs as the central element of TBLT tasks in Indonesia remain scarce, particularly those employing in-depth qualitative approaches. Most previous research treats songs as supplementary or recreational activities rather than as the core of communicative tasks. Yet, songs have substantial potential as authentic input and reflective media for fostering creativity and enhancing students’ holistic language skills. Furthermore, few studies adopt an emic perspective, examining how teachers and students themselves experience and interpret this method, as well as the challenges they encounter in practice. Such a perspective is crucial to reveal the lived realities of teaching and learning, beyond measurable outcomes.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching through songs at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta. The focus is not merely on the quantitative effectiveness of the method but on students’ experiences, engagement, and teachers’ adaptive strategies in contextualizing the TBLT framework to real classroom conditions. In this process, songs are not treated as mere entertainment but as a bridge between authentic input and challenging communicative tasks. This study reveals how the integration of TBLT and song media opens creative spaces, builds students’ confidence, and creates meaningful learning experiences.

Through a descriptive–interpretive qualitative approach, this study seeks to explore classroom dynamics in a more humanistic way, how students respond, how teachers innovate, and how learning atmospheres naturally develop. From this, new insights are expected to emerge regarding how TBLT can be implemented adaptively in Indonesian secondary schools despite existing limitations. Indirectly, this research offers a contextual and realistic model of implementation for English teachers, a small but significant step toward more communicative, enjoyable, and meaningful language learning for Indonesian students.

# **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was designed to capture the experiences, meanings, and dynamics of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through songs in a deep and contextual manner. A descriptive–interpretive qualitative approach was chosen because the research aimed not merely to measure quantitative effectiveness but to understand how teachers and students experience the learning process, how song-based tasks are designed and implemented, and what contextual factors influence them (Muskat et al., 2018; Stanley, 2023). This approach provides space for the emic perspective, the voices of teachers and students, which is essential for formulating a model of implementation relevant to real classroom practices in Indonesia (Hendren et al., 2023; Phillips, 2023).

The study site, SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta, was selected because it represents an authentic setting of pedagogical innovation in which an English teacher intentionally developed song-based activities to adapt the TBLT framework to junior high school conditions characterized by large classes, limited time, and heterogeneous proficiency levels. The site was also chosen for its accessibility and feasibility for sustained observation, enabling naturalistic data collection and authentic documentation (Stanley, 2023). The main informant was one English teacher who designed and implemented the song-based activities. This teacher was selected purposively due to her experience and clear motivation in applying TBLT. In addition, approximately 25–30 eighth-grade students from one class served as secondary informants, as they directly participated in the activities and represented diverse language abilities typical of real classrooms. Informant selection was based on relevance to the research phenomenon to ensure rich and contextual data (Kodithuwakku, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through repeated participant observations across several sessions to document teacher–student interactions, the sequence of activities (pre-task, task cycle, and post-task), and student responses, complemented by audio/video recordings and field notes for activity pattern analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with the teacher to explore pedagogical rationales, task design, and reflective insights, and with selected students to capture learning experiences, motivation, and perceived challenges. Supporting documents, such as song lyrics, student worksheets, and lesson plans, were gathered to trace learning artifacts and connect them to classroom practices. This multimethod strategy ensured data complementarity: observations revealed what happened, interviews explained why, and documentation verified how learning products reflected practice (Khan, 2019; Susanto et al., 2024). Data analysis began with full transcription of interviews and observations, followed by thematic analysis using the stages proposed by de Villiers et al. (2022): data familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, and interpretive narrative writing linking findings with the TBLT framework. Observation notes were analyzed to identify interaction patterns according to TBLT stages, while documents were examined for alignment between tasks and communicative goals.

To ensure trustworthiness, triangulation was applied across three dimensions: methodological triangulation (observation, interview, documentation), source triangulation (teacher and students), and analytical triangulation through peer debriefing and member checking to confirm interpretations. Additional reliability strategies included audit trails, researcher reflexivity, and thick description to allow readers to assess the transferability of findings (Kodithuwakku, 2022; Stanley, 2023). Ethical procedures were fulfilled through institutional permission, informed consent from the teacher and students’ guardians, data anonymization, and careful attention to participants’ well-being throughout the research process.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## **Implementing TBLT through Songs: Creative Adaptation in the Indonesian Secondary School Context**

The implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through songs at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta demonstrates how a communicative approach can be creatively adapted within the context of English language learning in Indonesian secondary schools, which remain largely dominated by grammatical methods. In the observed classroom, the English teacher did not rely solely on conventional instructional procedures but utilized songs as authentic tasks that stimulated both emotional and linguistic engagement among students. Based on field observations, the class, comprising approximately thirty students, displayed dynamic interaction, as the learning atmosphere shifted from passive to participatory. The songs used, such as Count on Me (Bruno Mars) and Perfect (Ed Sheeran), were selected for their accessible lyrics, relevance to adolescent experiences, and positive themes of friendship and self-confidence.

The pre-task stage began with introducing the context of the song and activating students’ prior knowledge. The teacher, referred to as Ms. R., opened the lesson by playing a short clip of the song while asking students to guess its theme and underlying message. During this activity, students were not passive listeners; they actively speculated on word meanings and linked them to their personal experiences. One student, as recorded in field notes, spontaneously remarked that Count on Me reminded them of their best friend at school. This activity exemplified a fundamental TBLT principle, focus on meaning, as explained by Liu et al. (2021), emphasizing that language tasks should elicit authentic communication and meaning-making rather than mere mastery of linguistic forms.

During the task cycle, the teacher asked students to work in small groups to complete song lyrics with certain words deliberately omitted. This activity functioned not only as a listening gap-fill exercise but also as a form of meaning negotiation, as students discussed which words best fit the context. Observation revealed lively group discussions despite variations in students’ proficiency levels. In one group, higher-proficiency students assisted their peers, fostering a sense of collaboration typical of task-based learning.

This process illustrates the concept of pedagogical improvisation described by Branden and Gorp (2021), the teacher’s ability to adjust task implementation based on real classroom conditions without losing pedagogical integrity. Ms. R. did not pressure students for quick or perfect answers; instead, she emphasized the importance of understanding the song’s message. In the interview, she noted that this approach made students “more willing to speak” and “less afraid of making mistakes,” as songs created a relaxed atmosphere. This aligns with the field finding that songs function as affective filter reducers, lowering anxiety and enhancing learners’ confidence in using the target language.

The post-task stage focused on reflection and creative production. Students were asked to rewrite the song’s message in their own words or recreate parts of the lyrics with different themes but similar meanings. For example, some students produced new versions of Perfect describing “friendship at school,” while others created mixed Indonesian–English versions expressing feelings toward their families. The teacher facilitated a sharing session where students read their works aloud. This activity reinforced the third principle of TBLT, reflection on learning experience and using language as a medium of personal expression. Field observations indicated that post-task activities were the most engaging moments for students. They appeared enthusiastic, applauded one another, and even added simple rhythmic elements such as clapping or tapping on desks. These scenes revealed the social and emotional dimensions of language learning, where language functions not merely as a cognitive object but as a medium for building social relationships within the classroom. The teacher acted as a curriculum maker, interpreting the curriculum creatively, rather than a mere curriculum follower who mechanically executes prescribed steps.

**Table 1** Implementation of TBLT Stages through Songs in English Classes at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TBLT Stage** | **Classroom Activity** | **Main Focus** | **Observed Outcome** |
| Pre-task | Listening to song excerpts, guessing the theme, discussing meaning | Schema activation, meaning focus | Students became more prepared and engaged |
| Task cycle | Completing lyrics in groups, discussing meanings | Meaning negotiation, collaboration | Increased participation and active communication |
| Post-task | Reflection and lyric recreation | Creative production, meaning reflection | Improved confidence and creativity |

Source: Research data analysis, 2024

These activities illustrate the flexibility and contextual relevance of TBLT in Indonesian secondary education. The teacher successfully integrated global pedagogical principles with local realities, including limited time, large class sizes, and diverse proficiency levels. As noted in observation records, the 80-minute lesson period often felt insufficient, yet the teacher skillfully balanced linguistic achievement and emotional engagement. She prioritized interaction quality over quantity of drills, a strategy aligned with Kadir’s (2021) view on task sequencing and adaptation, emphasizing that language tasks should be socially and culturally contextualized.

Moreover, interviews with several students revealed positive perceptions of this method. One student, S.A., stated that learning through songs helped them “remember new words more easily” and “feel less bored.” Another, N.H., added that songs made English feel “more real” because it could be connected to their daily lives. These findings show that songs are not merely teaching aids but also bridges between adolescent life and the target language, reinforcing contextual relevance in language learning.

## **Songs as Sources of Authentic Input and Affective Filter Reducers**

In the English classroom at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta, songs functioned not only as entertainment media but as rich sources of authentic input and effective affective filter reducers. Within a typically grammar-oriented and rigid learning environment, songs introduced a more natural, contextual, and emotional dimension. Field observations revealed significant shifts in classroom atmosphere when songs like Count on Me or Perfect were played: students appeared more relaxed, their faces brightened with enthusiasm, and even usually passive learners began humming softly along. This demonstrates that songs bridge the gap between language as a symbolic system and language as a living emotional experience.

The concept of songs as authentic input rests on the premise that language should be acquired through exposure to meaningful, natural use. Stecuła and Wolniak (2022) highlight that in TBLT, tasks should involve real communicative use of language rather than artificial drills. Songs inherently provide this: they contain idiomatic vocabulary, everyday expressions, varied pronunciation, and syntactic structures reflecting authentic language use. For instance, in Count on Me, students encounter the phrase “You can count on me like 1, 2, 3,” which introduces the idiom “count on” while simultaneously reinforcing rhythm and natural prosody that aid comprehension without analytical strain.

Ms. R. explained that she chose songs not just for their popularity but because “they contain living, memorable language,” reflecting her awareness of both the linguistic and psychological value of music as a learning resource.

Field findings further demonstrate how songs act as affective filter reducers. As Rose et al. (2021) outline, affective factors, such as anxiety, motivation, and confidence, greatly influence how linguistic input is processed. When the “affective filter” is high, language input is blocked; when the classroom atmosphere is relaxed and pressure-free, it lowers, facilitating more effective acquisition. At SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta, this phenomenon was clearly observable. Students who typically avoided speaking English began producing simple phrases they heard in the songs. One student, S.A., mentioned in an interview that while learning with songs, they were “not afraid of being wrong because everyone was singing, not just me.”

This aligns with findings by da Costa and Rose (2024), who report that positive affective engagement through enjoyable activities such as music and art increases learners’ willingness to communicate. Songs, therefore, function not only as linguistic tools but as safe psychological spaces where students can experiment with language without fear of failure.

Furthermore, songs facilitate natural language processing due to their rhythmic and repetitive qualities, which enhance memory retention. In one observation session, several students were able to recall and reproduce song lines even a week later, indicating that songs function as mnemonic devices. Miranda et al. (2021) term this music-mediated learning engagement, in which cognitive (language processing) and affective (emotion and motivation) dimensions intertwine harmoniously. Songs thus create a multisensory learning experience, students listen, feel, and interpret language simultaneously.

Students also reported that songs made them feel “closer to English.” N.H. remarked that songs helped them realize that English is “a language used for beautiful things like music,” while another student, M.R., said that songs made lessons “less boring and more real.” The teacher confirmed these views, noting that songs helped bridge “text and context” and connected linguistic forms with students’ emotional experiences.

Empirical observations confirmed that songs lowered affective barriers. In one session, when the teacher invited students to sing along, the atmosphere became more fluid. Even those who usually sat quietly at the back began joining in. The teacher did not assess their singing formally but appreciated their effort to use the language. The previously tense classroom transformed into a participatory space filled with laughter, clapping, and spontaneous remarks.

**Table 2** Functions of Songs as Authentic Input and Affective Filter Reducers

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Aspect** | **Function of Songs** | **Field Evidence** | **Impact on Students** |
| Linguistic | Provide authentic input: idiomatic vocabulary, natural pronunciation | Count on Me and Perfect used in lyric analysis | Improved vocabulary comprehension and natural expression |
| Affective | Reduce anxiety and enhance motivation | Relaxed classroom atmosphere; students sang and laughed together | Increased confidence and active participation |
| Cognitive–Emotional | Integrate meaning-making and emotional experience | Personal reflection on song meanings | More meaningful and lasting learning |

Source: Research data analysis, 2024

The analysis suggests that the power of songs lies not only in enriching linguistic input but also in their affective potential to foster a sense of safety and confidence. Songs blur the boundary between “learning” and “enjoyment,” transforming English from a subject into a social and emotional experience. Here, the teacher serves as a facilitator of emotional atmosphere rather than a transmitter of content, signaling a pedagogical shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered learning environments, where success is measured not by grammatical accuracy but by emotional engagement and participation.

## **Student Response and Engagement: From Passive Participation to Meaningful Communication**

The behavioral transformation observed among students during the implementation of song-based learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta signifies a fundamental shift from passive participation to meaningful communication. Within a classroom culture traditionally characterized by teacher-centered instruction and grammar-focused learning, the use of songs as the core task within the framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has created a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Classroom observations revealed that activities beginning with listening to songs, completing lyrics, and discussing their meanings elicited spontaneous responses from students. They were no longer silent recipients awaiting teacher instructions but began asking questions, sharing interpretations, and laughing together when they encountered humorous or interesting word meanings. This atmosphere reflected a transition from an evaluative classroom space to an exploratory one, a form of engagement that was both more authentic and more humanizing.

In the initial stages of implementation, several students appeared hesitant to speak English, exhibiting typical EFL learner behaviors such as fear of making mistakes or embarrassment in front of peers. However, as the song-based activities progressed, students’ expressions gradually changed. In one observed session, when the teacher played Count on Me by Bruno Mars, several students began mouthing the lyrics, while others took notes on unfamiliar words. The teacher then asked them to fill in the missing lyrics, and this became the moment when interaction began to flourish. Students discussed possible answers in small groups, leading to instances of spontaneous communication in English, even if halting or grammatically imperfect. The teacher intentionally created space for linguistic errors without immediate correction, offering praise or encouragement instead. This approach aligns with the principle of a safe communicative space, where errors are not treated as failures but as natural components of communication.

Interviews with students reinforced these observations. One student, F.A., remarked that learning through songs made them “less afraid to speak because everyone participates.” They added that discussing song meanings helped them understand vocabulary “without memorizing.” Similarly, N.H. stated, “Filling in the lyrics made me curious about word meanings, so I learned on my own without being told.” These statements reflect the emergence of intrinsic cognitive engagement rather than extrinsically driven motivation based on grades or assignments. According to Lee and Fanguy (2022), learner engagement encompasses three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, affective, and social. All three were evident in the song-based activities, students thought and interpreted (cognitive), experienced joy and confidence (affective), and interacted collaboratively with peers and the teacher (social).

Empirically, this transformation was visible in the increase of both verbal and nonverbal participation during lessons. At the beginning of the learning cycle, only two or three high-achieving students typically responded to teacher questions. However, after three sessions using song-based methods, nearly half of the class began raising their hands when the teacher asked about the meaning of certain phrases. Similar changes were observable in students’ body language: they sat upright, faced forward, and displayed excitement when songs began to play. In an interview, the teacher noted, “I don’t have to push them to speak anymore; the songs themselves make them want to comment.”

This change signifies the emergence of organic participation, a form of engagement that develops naturally as students find personal relevance in the learning material. Songs function as triggers that stimulate not only linguistic understanding but also curiosity and self-expression. When students discussed songs exploring themes such as friendship, love, or dreams, they did not merely translate words but sought to relate the meanings to their own experiences. In one discussion session on Perfect by Ed Sheeran, several students began sharing personal stories about their friends or families using simple English sentences. The teacher did not interrupt but encouraged them to continue speaking, in line with the TBLT principle of meaning-focused interaction, which values successful communication based on mutual understanding rather than grammatical accuracy.

The supportive classroom atmosphere did not arise spontaneously; it was cultivated through the teacher’s strategic management of emotional and social dynamics. Observations revealed that the teacher consistently opened the lesson with light questions such as “Who likes music?” or “What kind of songs do you listen to?” These served as psychological bridges connecting students’ personal lives with the lesson content. The teacher frequently smiled and provided positive reinforcement for every student effort, no matter how small. In interviews, she emphasized that her goal was to make students feel accepted because “children cannot learn a language if they are afraid.” This reflects the application of affective principles in communicative pedagogy, where positive emotions form the foundation of cognitive engagement.

Field observations further revealed that peer interaction developed more naturally than in traditional question–answer models. During the lyric completion tasks, students frequently whispered, guessed missing words, and helped one another write them down. When the song was replayed for verification, several groups cheered when their guesses were correct. This dynamic illustrates the emergence of peer scaffolding, in which students support one another’s understanding without evaluative pressure. In sociocultural learning theory, such interaction is crucial because it enables negotiation of meaning within collaborative contexts. In this sense, songs served as social stimuli that fostered solidarity and linguistic collaboration.

The shift from passive participation to meaningful communication was also evident in the way students internalized song meanings. They no longer treated words as items to be memorized but as parts of a living context. When the teacher asked them to explain a song’s meaning in their own words, nearly all students could offer an interpretation, even if expressed in simple sentences. Some even used emotional expressions to describe their feelings toward the song. For instance, one student said that the song “reminds me of a friend who always helps me,” indicating that learning occurred not only at the linguistic level but also at the affective and social levels.

**Table 3** Patterns of Student Engagement in Song-Based Learning

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| **Dimension of Engagement** | **Field Indicators** | **Impact on Learning Process** |
| Cognitive | Students actively seek word meanings within song contexts | Improved comprehension without rote memorization |
| Affective | Students express joy and confidence while singing and discussing | Reduced anxiety, enhanced motivation |
| Social | Students collaborate and discuss lyrics together | Formation of mutual support and sense of belonging |

Source: Research data analysis, 2024

Conceptually, this engagement process illustrates how songs act as catalysts in establishing a safe communicative space within the language classroom. In such a space, students feel free to experiment with language, express their identities, and learn through genuine interaction. Within the context of Indonesian secondary education, where language ability is often measured through written exams, this transformation is crucial. It underscores that meaningful communication arises from psychological comfort and positive social relationships. Songs, therefore, are not merely instructional media but social instruments that enable learners to discover their own linguistic voices.

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: Between Teacher Creativity and Structural Constraints**

The implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through songs at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Jakarta not only demonstrates the successful application of a communicative approach but also reveals how the dynamics of Indonesian secondary school contexts demand both teacher creativity and adaptation to structural constraints. The teacher, who served as the key informant in this study, displayed high adaptive capacity in balancing the pedagogical ideals of TBLT with classroom realities shaped by tight schedules, diverse proficiency levels, and administrative pressures from the national curriculum. Within this context, both supporting and inhibiting factors play crucial roles in determining the sustainability and effectiveness of song-based TBLT implementation.

A major supporting factor was the teacher’s ability to select songs relevant and meaningful to students. Field observations indicated that the teacher did not simply use popular English songs but aligned them with lesson themes and students’ linguistic levels. For example, she selected Bruno Mars’s Count on Me for the topic “Expressing Gratitude and Solidarity” because its theme of friendship matched the lesson’s communicative objectives. This choice proved effective, as students displayed enthusiasm from the start. They sang along, some mimicking the singer’s intonation spontaneously. Observational notes indicated that the song stimulated natural interaction, students smiled, commented on lyrics, and asked about expressions they did not understand. The teacher then connected the lyrics to daily life expressions such as “You can count on me like one, two, three,” linking it to social solidarity among friends. In interviews, the teacher (G) explained that songs like this “help students engage more easily with the material because it feels familiar and not intimidating.” This illustrates how relevant song selection can bridge formal learning with students’ emotional experiences.

In addition to song relevance, the teacher’s creativity in designing classroom activities was a decisive factor in the success of song-based TBLT. Observations revealed that she did not merely play songs and ask students to fill in missing lyrics but developed a sequence of tasks following TBLT stages: pre-task, task cycle, and post-task. During the task cycle, for example, students were divided into small groups to discuss the moral message of the song and rewrite parts of the lyrics with their own versions. This not only stimulated linguistic skills but also enhanced social collaboration. Several students admitted that group work made them “more courageous to speak” and “less afraid of being wrong.” Such engagement demonstrates that relaxed and creative learning atmospheres encourage students’ confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

However, despite these successes, several structural challenges limited the teacher’s flexibility in implementing song-based TBLT. Time constraints were among the most significant. In Indonesian secondary schools, a single English lesson typically lasts only 40–45 minutes. The teacher acknowledged that this duration was often insufficient to complete all TBLT stages, which ideally involve exploration, production, and reflection. As a result, she improvised by condensing stages or assigning follow-up tasks outside class. She noted, “Sometimes we only discuss half of the song, but I continue it next week or make it a writing assignment.” This demonstrates practical adaptation to time constraints through the creation of micro-tasks that remain communicative in focus despite limited duration.

Another challenge was the heterogeneity of students’ proficiency levels. In one observed class, there was a significant gap between students who had early exposure to English and those who were learning it formally for the first time. When the teacher used songs with fast tempos or idiomatic vocabulary, some students struggled to keep up with the lyrics. Observations recorded that some students stared silently at the screen, while others actively sang along. To address this gap, the teacher implemented differentiated instruction by grouping students based on proficiency levels. More proficient learners acted as peer tutors to help their peers understand word meanings or sentence structures. This collaborative approach reflects the teacher’s understanding of context-sensitive pedagogy, as described by Peng and Pyper (2021), emphasizing that the success of TBLT depends not only on task design but also on the teacher’s ability to adapt tasks to the classroom’s social and individual dynamics.

Additional challenges stemmed from curriculum and institutional support. Although Indonesia’s national curricula (*Kurikulum Merdeka* and *Kurikulum 2013*) encourage communicative approaches, they provide little technical guidance for implementing TBLT, let alone song-based instruction. The teacher acknowledged that she often “improvised” and “found her own ways” to align song activities with the school’s expected learning outcomes. The absence of structural guidance made such initiatives dependent on teachers’ motivation and school leadership support. In this case, the school principal’s openness was a critical supporting factor. The teacher stated that school leaders “allowed freedom as long as it supported students’ learning enthusiasm,” fostering a culture of innovation within the institution.

Analysis of these factors reveals that the success of song-based TBLT is not the result of direct theoretical application but the outcome of a series of contextual adaptations and pedagogical improvisations by the teacher. In line with the concept of situated TBLT practice, this learning model emerges from the intersection of global pedagogical ideals, such as authentic tasks and meaningful interaction, and the local realities of Indonesian schools shaped by time constraints, resource limitations, and policy frameworks. Within this framework, the teacher acts not merely as a curriculum implementer but as a curriculum maker who actively interprets and contextualizes global approaches to fit local educational realities.

# **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through songs in Indonesian secondary schools not only enables communicative and meaningful language learning but also highlights the essential role of teacher creativity in adapting global theories to local contexts. By integrating songs as sources of authentic tasks, the teacher successfully fostered learning experiences that combined cognitive, social, and affective engagement, transforming the learning process from mechanical, grammar-based instruction into one that nurtures participation, speaking confidence, and enjoyment in language use. The findings demonstrate that songs serve dual functions as authentic input and affective filter reducers, enriching linguistic exposure while reducing students’ anxiety in using English. Despite ongoing challenges, such as limited instructional time, varying proficiency levels, and the absence of explicit curricular guidelines for TBLT, the teacher demonstrated a context-sensitive pedagogy characterized by contextual improvisation and adaptation. Consequently, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions through a song-based TBLT model that converges communicative principles with Indonesia’s educational realities, representing a pedagogical innovation that bridges methodological ideals with the emotional and social needs of EFL learners in the classroom.

# **ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE**

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants’ confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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