

## **The Effect of Background Music and Gender Differences on Students' Reading Comprehension in Grade Eight SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar in the Academic Year 2013/2014**

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### **Abstrak**

Rendahnya kemampuan memahami bacaan oleh siswa SMP menjadi dasar dari penelitian ini. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk menginvestigasi efek dari musik latar pada kemampuan memahami isi bacaan oleh siswa SMP. Selain itu, perbedaan jender siswa juga digunakan sebagai variabel moderator. Populasi penelitian tersebar pada sepuluh kelas dan melalui teknik sampel acak, di dapat dua kelas yang kemudian di kelompokkan menjadi grup eksperimen dan grup kontrol. Secara keseluruhan, jumlah sampel yang digunakan dalam penelitian adalah 80 sampel. Untuk memperoleh data penelitian, digunakan skor dari postes yang kemudian di olah dengan dua metode statistik yaitu statistik deskriptif dan inferensial. Di akhir investigasi, ditemukan bahwa (1) ada perbedaan yang signifikan pada kemampuan memahami bacaan antara siswa yang diajar dengan menggunakan perlakuan musik latar dengan siswa yang diajar tanpa musik latar (2) ada perbedaan yang signifikan pada kemampuan memahami bacaan antara siswa perempuan dengan siswa laki – laki. (3) terdapat interaksi antara perlakuan musik latar dan teknik konvensional dan juga jender pada kemampuan membaca siswa SMP, (4) terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan pada siswa perempuan yang diberi perlakuan musik latar dengan siswa perempuan yang tidak diberi perlakuan musik latar, dan (5) tidak terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan pada siswa laki – laki yang diberi perlakuan musik latar dengan siswa laki – laki yang tidak diberi perlakuan dengan musik latar.

Kata Kunci: Musik latar, jender, pemahaman membaca, teknik mengajar konvensional.

### **Abstract**

The low ability of the junior school students in reading comprehension was the basis of this study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of background music treatment on reading comprehension of junior school students. Besides that, gender factor was also put into consideration and was also investigated as the moderator variable. There were ten classes as the population and by using intact group random sampling, two classes were chosen as the samples of the investigation and divided into the group with experimental treatment and the group without the experimental treatment. In total, there were eighty students selected as the representative of the whole population. To collect the data, the study used reading comprehension test which was administered at the end of teaching sessions. In investigating the result, two statistical methods were applied namely descriptive and inferential statistics by using two - way ANOVA. At the end of investigation, it was found that, first, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension between the students who were treated by using background music and the students who were not treated by using background music. Second, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension between female and male students, third there was a significant interaction between the background music and gender differences towards the students' reading comprehension, fourth there was a significant difference between female students who were treated by using background music and female students who were not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension, last there was no significant difference between male students who were treated by using background music and male students who were not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension.

Keywords: background music, gender, reading, conventional teaching method.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is being an important language, which is used by people as an international language. English has become one of the most important school subjects in our curriculum from elementary school until university. Furthermore, Indonesia, as one of the countries in which English is used as a foreign language, has begun its long-term investment in English education starting from the early age. In smaller scope, Bali requires English as a basic requirement that needs to be improved in line with the progress of tourism industry. Teaching English as local content in Bali aims at providing knowledge and skills of English for the learners in order to make them able to support regional and national development. The skills that are provided in teaching English include listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Considering the importance of reading in teaching English, Indonesian government provides sets of standard competency and basic competency as the minimal requirements that should be achieved by the students in reading skills. The importance of reading skill is composed in the Competence-Based-Curriculum (CBC) of English for junior school. It is oriented towards providing real life reading skills. The objectives of the skill include identifying particular information contained in a text. This objective makes reading is not separated from other language skills.

From those four skills, reading has arisen as the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends (Moats, 1999). Pang et al. (2003) says that learning to read is an important educational goal. For children, adolescents and adults, the ability to read opens up new worlds and opportunities. It enables students to gain new knowledge, enjoy literature, and do everyday things that are part and parcel of modern life, such as, reading the newspapers, job listings, instruction manuals, maps and so on.

When we look into the standard of reading competencies in the CBC English curriculum we could say that the primary purpose of reading is to understand meaning of short simple monolog text in the form of descriptive and recount text accurately and fluently in daily life situation. It is in line with the reading objectives stated in the CBC English curriculum, namely (1). students are able to analyze generic structure of a short monolog text in form of descriptive and recount text. (2). students are able to analyze the information from a short monolog text in form of descriptive and recount text explicit or implicitly. (3). students are able to read a simple monolog in the form of descriptive and recount text accurately and fluently.

To achieve the goals mentioned previously, the teachers need to consider the best technique to be used in classroom. It is surely needed because junior school students are unique, they neither children nor adult learners. Young adolescents are defined in *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 2003) as those students who are 10 to 15 years old. They need educational programs that are designed specifically for their age group because of their uniqueness in terms of intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. The phenomenal growth that is occurring at this time of their lives presents unique challenges for educators. Also, this is a time of life when young people are forming values and making decisions that will impact them for the rest of their lives. This is a most impressionable age, which places additional responsibility on middle grade educators.

The middle grade is usually thought of as grades 7 through 9; however, there are many variations that can be housed in a middle school. The program must be responsive to the academic and developmental needs of the young adolescent learner.

It is a fact that the way of learning of adolescent learners is different from young and adult learners. Adolescent learners are a study in contradictions

(Naomi, 2005). The key in making young learners being succeeded in learning is by creating fun and enjoyable activity in their learning process.

According to (Goodman, 1994 in Sundayana, 2004), there are a lot of learning activities that can help the teachers to reach the objectives of reading that mentioned previously from guessing technique (guess the content of the text based on the picture given, guess the meaning of derivate contained in the text based on the related word etc) until identifying technique ( identify words, phrases, or clauses through the given references, identify synonym and antonym, identify a particular information contained in a text quickly, identify key words to infer main ideas of the given text, identify main ideas of a text or a paragraph and its supporting details, describe the difference between main ideas and supporting details, identify paragraph structure, e.g., whether it is organized from general to specific or vice versa, identify the content of the given letter (formal or informal) and complete the text with the given words).

The other technique or treatment that can be used is through the use of background music while reading activity. The use of music as a technique in teaching is not a new idea, especially in reading. In 1970s, Georgi Lozanov develops an approach in teaching named 'Suggestopedia', which comes from his belief that learners need a relaxed but focused state as the optimum state for learning (Bowen, 2002). In order to create this relaxed state in the learner and to promote positive suggestion, suggestopedia makes used of soothing, rhythmic music, a comfortable and relaxing environment (Gabriela, 2012).

Larsen and Freeman (2000) state that learners set up psychological barriers to learning and thus learners do not use the full mental powers they have. They fear that they will be unable to perform or be limited in their ability to learn so they fear that they will fail. In order to use learners' reserved capacity, the limitations have needed to be "desuggested." Desuggestopedia has been developed to

help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful and the negative association they may have toward studying. The suggestive-desuggestive process allows students to go beyond previously held beliefs and self-limiting concepts concerning the learning process and learn great quantities of material with ease and enjoyment

Within our culture, there are several different types of music from classical, rock, metal, hip-hop, trance, jazz, folks, techno, opera until some new music genres like Blues, new age music, Celtic music, religious music, Chamber music (Ajanta Battacharyya, 2011). Each individual has his/her preference of music whether it is jazz, rhythm and blues, pop, rock, or etc. Music affects us in different ways and can either cause arousal or lower arousal, depending upon the type of music. Music can have emotional effects on mood as well as varying effects on our ability to concentrate on cognitive tasks. Giles (1991) says that most pupils function very well with music in the background and the right music at the right time can make them less stressed, more relaxed, happier and more productive.

The effect of music on the moods, emotions and behaviour of both individuals and groups has been noted throughout history. A number of writers have discussed the functions of music, while others have researched both the physiological and psychological effects. As a result of this research music has come to be considered as lying on a continuum from highly stimulating and invigorating to soothing or calming (Gaston, 1968). There is certainly strong evidence from a variety of sources that people respond differently to stimulative and sedative music (Radocy and Boyle, 1988).

Although the advantages and the techniques of reading comprehension have been well explained, some teachers are still implementing the conventional reading method, that is, to emphasize on the product and not on the process.

Strengthened by the discussion done with the English teacher of SMP

Negeri 4 Denpasar that reading mastery is still becoming a big problem faced by the teacher and the students. It was found that the problem was caused by the lack of technique that was applied by the teacher. Teaching reading was still centered on the teacher. The teacher explained and introduced some new vocabularies and asked the students to read a paragraph in the textbook. After that, the students were only assigned to answer the tasks in textbook without being given the opportunity to move further. This teaching method was continuing in every meeting. Several students who were interviewed said that the teaching reading activity created a boring situation for the students.

The fact that most of English teachers in Indonesia are still implementing the same technique in teaching reading cannot be rejected. Changing the habit of teaching in a day is of course impossible. Adding innovation to the conventional way is the best way to improve reading skill of the students. One of the treatments that can be conducted by the teachers is by using background music while reading. Music can affect us in many different ways. The right choice of music in the best time can influence our moods and concentration.

Besides the teaching reading method, according to the teacher, there is a gap between the reading proficiency between the female and male students. Female students have better reading performance than male students. Many studies conducted and found that female and male students learn differently. Most of the researchers conclude that "female outperforms male" (Pomerantz, Altermatt & Saxon, 2002 in Algoe, 2012). The differences can clearly be seen in the classroom. Female students frequently have higher standards in the classroom, and evaluate their own performance more critically. Female students also achieve better grades than male students. Better performance shown by female students are not caused by better self confident or self esteem than male students, but it is more likely to be excessively critical in evaluating their own academic

performance. On the other hand, male students tend to have unrealistically high estimates of their own academic and accomplishments. Ratminingsih (2012) also finds that female learners have better speaking competency than male learners. The differences are caused by the difference characteristics between female and male students. Further she reports that female speaks more often than male because female uses not only their logic but also their feeling while male tends to be more realistic. Based on those descriptions, the study then focuses at investigating the application of background music with regard to male and female students in grade eight of SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar and find out the differences between them.

This study focuses on the effect of background music on students' reading comprehension with consideration of gender differences, which was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar.

Since this study is about empowering an innovation to improve the students' ability in reading comprehension, positive contribution is expected to be beneficial for both the teacher and the students as the main actors and also for the other researchers who are interested in the same issue, last, it is hoped that the result of this study can be used as additional material in our institution, in teaching the prospective teachers about the appropriate technique in teaching reading for adolescent learners.

## **METHOD**

The population of the study was five classes there were ten classes as the population and by using intact random sampling, two classes were chosen as the sample and divided into the group with experimental treatment and without experimental treatment. In total there were eighty students selected as the representative of the whole population. The research was done in SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar in grade two in academic year 2013/ 2014. The selection factor was the gender of the students. The selection factor was divided into male or female

students. The research procedure in this research was divided into three phases from preparation phase such as setting up the reading comprehension test based on the blue print which has been examined by the expert judges, trying the instrument out to different class, that is IX B of SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar to know the validity and the reliability of the test, designing the lesson plans and the worksheets for the experimental class and lesson plans for the control group. The investigation of students' reading comprehension covered short essay in narrative and recount text, asking permission to the headmaster of SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar last, setting up the schedule of the research. The research was conducted in SMP Negeri 4 Denpasar in second grade during the second semester of the academic year 2013/2014. The research was held during

February and March for three weeks. The researcher used regular schedule in replacing the real English teacher in both classes. There were two meetings in every week for both classes, and every class had 80 minutes for time allotment. Since the topic was related to the present syllabus, the researcher was easily in making coordination with the teacher. There were total five meetings for each class, four continuous meetings to do teaching and learning process and one meeting to do reading comprehension test.

The second phase was implementation. Between experimental and control group were basically have similar implementation but the learning process between the group are different. The summary of the implementation can be seen from the table below

**Table 3. Research Implementation**

No	Component of Experiment	Background treatment Group	Music Learning Group	Conventional Learning Group
1	Teaching material	Narrative and Recount text		Narrative and recount text
2	Teaching technique	Conventional technique		Conventional technique
3	Time allotment	2x40 minutes, twice a week. The period of the research are during February and March		2x40 minutes twice a week. The period of the research are during February and March
4	Subject teacher	The researcher		The researcher
5	Learning process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explaining the learning goal</li> <li>2. Discussing the topic being discussed</li> <li>3. Asking the students to find out difficult words</li> <li>4. Explaining the characteristics of the text</li> <li>5. Preparing the audio system to start the treatment</li> <li>6. Distributing a text related to the topic to the students</li> <li>7. Asking the students to read</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explaining the learning goal</li> <li>2. Discussing the topic being discussed</li> <li>3. Asking the students to find out difficult words</li> <li>4. Explaining the characteristics of the text</li> <li>5. Distributing a text related to the topic to the students</li> <li>6. Asking the students to read the text silently</li> </ol>

		the text silently for a few minutes while listening to the background music	for a few minutes
		8. Distributing the reading comprehension test related to the text to the students	7. Distributing the reading comprehension text related to the text to the students
		9. Asking the students to do the test while listening to the background music	8. Asking the students to do the test.
<b>6</b>	Type of exercise	Multiple choice	Multiple choice
<b>7</b>	Items	10	10
<b>8</b>	The frequency of exercise	4	4
<b>9</b>	Reading comprehension test	Multiple choice	Multiple choice
<b>10</b>	Number of reading comprehension test	50	50





The last phase to do was finalization phase. The reading comprehension test was said as the finalization phase. In this phase, the samples did the reading comprehension test and the result from the test was then calculated and analyzed

To collect the representative data, the study used reading comprehension test in the form of multiple choice. Furthermore, the multiple choice test was then said as the instrument. The choice of the test items was based on the syllabus and the blue print that has been examined by the experts. The topics of the test were about narrative and recount text. Besides reading comprehension test, there were also two supporting instruments; those were teaching scenario, teaching handout and background music.

After obtaining the scores from the post-test given to both the experimental and control groups, two statistical methods were performed. The data were analyzed by two forms of statistical analysis namely descriptive statistic analysis and inferential statistic analysis. In descriptive statistics, median, mode, range, mean score and standard deviation were calculated. In inferential statistics, the two - way ANOVA was administered, however, before administering inferential statistics, two tests must be done first, those were normal distribution test and

The hypothesis testing was done by two – way ANOVA and the summary of :

homogeneity test in order to find out whether the test had normal distribution and homogeneity of variance or not since two - way ANOVA can only be done if the data have normal distribution and homogeneity of variance. By operating SPSS 15.0 for windows, it found that all of the data were normal and homogenous

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion of the findings has parts such as: first, to discuss about the significant difference between the students who are treated by using background music treatment and those who are not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension, second, to discuss about the significant difference of students' reading comprehension between female and male groups, third, to discuss about interaction between the background music and gender differences to the students' reading comprehension, fourth, to discuss about significant difference between male students who are treated by using background music and those who are not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension, and last, to discuss about the significant difference between female students who are treated by using background music and those who are not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension.

the testing is presented by the following table

	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>note</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>A</b>	510.050	1	510.050	0.000	Sig. < 005	Significant
<b>B</b>	259.200	1	259.200	0.006	Sig. < 0.05	Significant
<b>AB</b>	231.200	1	231.200	0.009	Sig. < 0.05	Significant
<b>E</b>	2473.100	76	32.541			
<b>Total</b>	126248.000	80				

The summary of two – way ANOVA above can be interpreted as follows:

**1. For hypothesis 1**

**There is significant difference in reading comprehension between the students who are taught by using background music treatment and those who are not treated by using background music.**

According to the result of two-way ANOVA testing, the value of probability or sig was 0.000 which was lower than the significance value of this study that was 0.05 (sig < 0.05), then it can be interpreted that Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted. It meant that there was significant difference in reading comprehension between the students with background music treatment and students without background treatment.

The descriptive statistic analysis indicated that the mean score of the students' reading comprehension treated by using background music was 39.550 while the mean score of the students' reading comprehension without background music was 34.150. The result of two - way ANOVA proved that students' reading comprehension treated by background music was higher than the students' reading comprehension without background music treatment. So, it could be concluded that there was a significant effect on the implementation of background music treatment on the students' reading comprehension.

**2. For hypothesis 2**

**There is significant difference of students' reading comprehension between female and male**

According to the result of two-way ANOVA testing, the value of probability or sig was 0.006 which was lower than the significance value of this study that was 0.05 (sig < 0.05), then it could be interpreted that Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted.

The descriptive statistic analysis indicated that the mean score of the female students' reading comprehension treated by using background music was 40.975 while the mean score of the male students' reading comprehension without background music was 37.375. It meant that there was significant difference in reading comprehension between female and male students.

**3. For hypothesis 3**

**There is interaction between the teaching treatment and gender differences**

Seeing from the table above, according to the result of two-way ANOVA testing, the value of probability or sig was 0.009 which was lower than the significance value of this study that was 0.05 (sig < 0.05), then it could be interpreted that Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted.

Since there was an interactional effect between background music and gender on reading comprehension, an additional analysis must be done to answer the hypothesis number four and five. The post hoc testing used in the study was Tukey test.

#### 4. For hypothesis 4

**There is significant difference between female students who are taught by using background music treatment and those who are not taught by using background music in their reading comprehension**

From the result of Tukey post hoc test, it was found that the  $Q_{ob}$  was 6.627. Meanwhile, the value of  $Q_{cv}(0.05, 2, 38) = 3.89$ . Since the value of  $Q_{ob}$  was higher than the value of  $Q_{cv}$ , so  $H_0$  that stated that there was no significant difference between female students who are treated by using background music treatment and those who are not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension was rejected.

The conclusion was that the  $H_a$  which stated there was a significant difference in reading comprehension between the female students' treated with background music and female students treated without background music was accepted. This conclusion was also strengthened by the descriptive analysis which found that the mean score of female students treated by using background music ( $\bar{X}_{A1B2} = 45.2000$ ) was higher than female students not treated by using background music ( $\bar{X}_{A2B2} = 36.7500$ ).

#### 5. For Hypothesis 5

**There is significant difference between male students who are taught by using background music and those who are not taught by using background music in their reading comprehension.**

From Tukey post hoc test calculation, it was obtained that

the value of  $Q_{ob} = 1.294$ . Meanwhile, the value of  $Q_{cv}(0.05, 2, 38) = 3.89$ . The value of  $Q_{ob}$  was higher than the value of  $Q_{cv}$ , so  $H_0$  was accepted while the  $H_a$  was rejected.

The conclusion was that there was no significant difference in reading comprehension between the male students treated with background music and male students treated without background music. This conclusion was also strengthened by the descriptive analysis which found that the mean score of the male students' that treated with background music was ( $\bar{X}_{A1B1}=38.200$ ) and the mean score of male students that treated without background music was ( $\bar{X}_{A2B1}=36.550$ ). Although there was a difference but it was not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis number five which said that there is no significant difference between male students who are treated by using background music and those who are not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension.

The findings successfully proved that background music could help the students to improve their reading comprehension significantly. There are some reasons why background music can give better performance on students' reading comprehension. According to Giles (1991) in Rinaldi (2010), soft, calming music and/or music with which the listener is familiar are best for background use. Giles continues that background music has a myriad of benefits, including helping students to relax, building their self-esteem, and helping them navigate difficult emotional problems. Since reading is the activity which need a concentration in order to comprehend the text, a well

emotional condition is really needed and the right choice of background music helps the students to be in that right emotional condition.

The hypothesis which stated that female outperformed male students in reading comprehension was also found in the study as presented in the analysis and this phenomenon are in line with the theory that stated by Linda (2012), where the differences are caused by different brain between female and male learners and divided from some aspects of differences. Because the structure of the brain between male and female learners is different, they process the learning activity differently. According to the observation made by the researcher, female students looked more interested in reading activity. During the teaching and learning process, female students asked and answered more frequently than male students. They were also did a lively discussion and sharing with other female students on the other side, male students seemed not really interested in reading, less motivated, do not value reading as an activity, less confident readers and see themselves as having lower reading skills than girls. During the test, female students were found quieter in doing the test than male students. In other words, reading activity is more interesting for female students Adcox (2013) states that according to the observation, boys are better in math and girls are better in language. Girls and boys do appear to process language differently, girls use both sides of their brains for language processing, whereas these functions appear to be limited to the left side in boys. Moreover, he notes that stuttering appears more often in boys.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Reflecting to the result of the findings that has been overviewed previously, the research can be summarized as follow: first, there was a significant difference on the group of the students with background music treatment and the group of the students without background music treatment. The students with background music treatment had better effect on students' reading comprehension than the

Ratminingsih (2012) also finds that female learners have better speaking competency than male learners. The differences are caused by the difference characteristics between female and male students. Further she reports that female speaks more often than male because female uses not only their logic but also their feeling while male tends to be more realistic. Male students also see reading activity as female activity which further blocks male students to read more than female students. This mental block caused the male students to avoid reading activity whatever the reading activity is delivered and it is proved by the finding where there is no significant difference on students' reading comprehension with background music and without background music. Strengthened by Herrmann (2010) in his study about the effect of background music in an educational setting found that calming background music produces a variety of positive physiological effects. Students become relaxed and focused. Their time on-task increases significantly, their mood is elevated, and aggressive behaviors are diminished. Greater time spent on-task ultimately translates into better academic performance. Social atmosphere is also improved. While conventional teaching method cannot provide enough mood boosters to the students. Conventional teaching method may be help the students to be able to read but not strong enough to make the students comprehend what they read since there is no media to build a positive psychological effect among the students which resulted in making the students relaxed and focused in what they read.

conventional one. Second, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension between female and male students. Despite the different treatment given to both groups, female students' mean score was higher than male students' mean score. It can be concluded that the implementation of the background music and conventional teaching method contributed significantly on the students' reading comprehension. Third, there was

a significant interactional effect of background music and the gender towards the students' reading comprehension. Fourth, there was a significant difference between female students who were treated by using background music and those who were not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension. Last, there was no significant difference between male students who were treated by using background music and those who were not treated by using background music in their reading comprehension.

Since the study ends in the conclusion that there was a significant difference on the students' reading comprehension, it is highly suggested to other English teachers to use background music in reading comprehension activity. Besides, the researcher expects other researchers who interested in the same topic to investigate the effect of background music on other students' skill such as writing or speaking so that the benefits of background music can be fully empowered.

Last, it is suggested to future researchers to investigate or to discover different techniques or treatments to improve male students' reading comprehension since background music cannot significantly improve the male students' reading comprehension.

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