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THE INFLUENCE OF POPULAR CULTURE TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY OF GENERATION Z STUDENT

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the increasingly strong influence of English-language popular culture in the daily lives of Generation Z university students and aims to examine the influence of popular culture on the English language learning strategies of Generation Z students. A quantitative correlational research design was employed in this study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 67 Generation Z students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training as well as several other universities in Lampung. The research instruments measured impact of popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, Pearson product–moment correlation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics 24. The results reveal a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies ($r = 0.983$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, the ANOVA results indicate significant differences in the use of English language learning strategies based on varying levels of popular culture exposure. These findings underscore the importance of popular culture as a meaningful factor in shaping English language learning strategies among Generation Z students and suggest its strategic integration into English language education to enhance learning effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Popular culture, commonly known as pop culture, has evolved into a global phenomenon that profoundly shapes the lives of contemporary societies (Storey, n.d.). In an era marked by intensified globalization and rapid advancements in information technology, popular culture is no longer confined to specific regions or national borders (Son, 2025). Instead, it transcends geographical and cultural boundaries with unprecedented speed. Through mass media, digital platforms, and social networks, elements of pop culture such as music, films, fashion, and social trends are disseminated instantaneously to

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millions of people (Hidayah & Retpitasari, 2023). This creates an interconnected ecosystem in which popular culture not only reflects prevailing societal values and norms but also actively shapes individual mindsets, social behaviors, and collective identities.

A prominent dimension of this influence is popular culture's ability to construct and reinforce both personal and communal identities. Popular music, for instance, frequently fosters emotional connections among listeners, giving rise to communities united by shared interests and experiences. Certain songs become generational symbols that encapsulate the aspirations, struggles, and sentiments of a society at particular historical moments. Similarly, widely consumed movies and television series function as cultural reference points that introduce new expressions, behaviors, and symbols into everyday discourse, many of which are adopted and normalized within broader communities (Bora Demir, 2021).

Popular culture also significantly influences consumption patterns and social behavior. Fashion trends emerging from pop culture often dictate how individuals dress and express themselves, with the styles of celebrities or fictional characters inspiring imitation and shaping societal standards of beauty and lifestyle. Moreover, marketing strategies frequently incorporate references to popular culture to capture consumer attention, stimulate emotional engagement, and drive demand for various products (Bora Demir, 2021). Despite these far-reaching influences, the impact of popular culture is not uniformly positive. Critics argue that pop culture often prioritizes materialistic and superficial values, contributing to cultural homogenization. The widespread dominance of global popular culture can overshadow local cultural identities, diluting traditional norms and replacing them with transient trends. Additionally, media portrayals within popular culture sometimes perpetuate stereotypes and inaccuracies, which may reinforce social biases and discrimination, ultimately generating adverse consequences for certain groups and broader society (Rakhda et al., 2026).

In the context of English language learning, popular culture ranging from music, films, online influencers, and social media content has emerged as an informal yet highly influential source of linguistic input (Telaumbanua et al.,

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2024). Specifically, Generation Z students, who are digitally native and socially connected through global media platforms, frequently encounter English expressions, phrases, and communication styles embedded in popular culture (Bora Demir, 2021). For example, interacting with content creators on platforms like TikTok or watching international streaming series provides continuous exposure to natural, unscripted English. Consequently, this exposure has the potential to enhance language familiarity, increase motivation, and facilitate authentic learning experiences by requiring students to decode linguistic input in real-time cultural contexts.

However, despite its growing impact, not all students benefit equally from popular culture as a learning resource. Differences in media consumption habits, learning preferences, and the absence of structured pedagogical integration create variability in outcomes. In addition, this variability suggests that passive exposure alone is often insufficient to guarantee linguistic progress, frequently leading to the acquisition of superficial slang without an underlying grasp of grammar or pragmatic competence. Therefore, there is a critical need to understand how popular culture influences the specific active learning strategies adopted by Generation Z students, and whether these learner-driven methods contribute meaningfully to their English language development beyond mere surface-level comprehension (Placer et al., 2024).

Examining the role of popular culture in language learning is essential because it reflects a significant shift in how modern learners acquire knowledge beyond formal classroom settings. As educational institutions increasingly integrate digital and cultural literacy into their curricula, understanding these emerging influences becomes crucial for designing effective learning interventions. In contrast, failing to address this shift may result in outdated teaching approaches that do not align with the lived experiences and learning behaviors of Generation Z, thereby missing opportunities to leverage their intrinsic interest. Furthermore, the relevance of this topic is heightened by the global nature of current cultural consumption, where English serves as the lingua franca for online communities and digital interaction (Bila Ayu Sheptia Ningrum,

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2025).

Moreover, the widespread consumption of global content has created a high-impact environment where English functions not only as an academic subject but also as a cultural bridge. This powerful connection allows learners to develop a sense of global identity and agency. This makes the topic highly relevant for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers seeking to improve language proficiency outcomes. In addition to its cultural significance, the strong connection between popular culture and learner motivation further underscores the importance of investigating how these cultural elements shape learning strategies among today's students. This investigation builds upon prior academic findings by attempting to move beyond motivational studies and into the realm of cognitive processing (Purwantoro et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated that popular culture contributes to increased engagement, authentic linguistic exposure, and motivation in English language learning; however, each presents limitations that leave important questions unanswered. (Rakhda et al., 2026) highlight TikTok's role in facilitating informal English acquisition, showing improvements in vocabulary and pronunciation, though the study lacks comparison with formal learning strategies and overlooks the potential drawbacks of informal language consumption. (Purwantoro et al., 2025) similarly confirms that popular culture shapes English language teaching through music, films, social media, and online trends, yet her work focuses on instructional practices rather than learner-driven strategies. (Placer et al., 2024) describes how popular culture products such as films, songs, TV series, and novels can enhance students' techniques, motivation, and English proficiency, yet it does not examine specific, measurable learning strategies adopted by learners. Collectively, these studies reveal several gaps: limited attention to Generation Z's unique digital-native behaviors; insufficient exploration of platform-specific dynamics across TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and other media; and a lack of balanced frameworks that address both the advantages and risks of pop culture in language learning. Therefore, this study addresses these research gaps by focusing specifically on Generation Z,

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examining multiple digital platforms that facilitate English exposure, and providing an empirically grounded analysis of how popular culture shapes distinct, observable English learning strategies while proposing practical approaches to optimize its pedagogical integration (Lin, 2017).

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How does popular culture influence the English language learning strategies of Generation Z students? The research aims to identify the specific strategies that emerge from popular culture exposure and to evaluate their role in supporting the learning process. Ultimately, the objective is to generate empirical insights that can inform both pedagogical theory by providing evidence-based practices and practical classroom applications by suggesting new ways to integrate authentic digital materials.

This study employs a quantitative method using structured questionnaires as the primary instrument for data collection. The quantitative design is selected to systematically measure the relationships between variables and to generate empirical evidence regarding the influence of popular culture exposure on English language learning strategies among Generation Z students. Through the use of standardized items and numerical scoring, the method enables objective assessment, statistical testing, and generalizable interpretations of students' behavioral tendencies. The findings derived from this quantitative analysis are expected to provide measurable insights into how contemporary cultural forces shape learners' strategic approaches to English language acquisition. By examining an underexplored intersection between popular culture and language learning strategy use, this study offers a substantive contribution to the field. It enhances the empirical literature by integrating perspectives from cultural studies into a statistically grounded understanding of English language learning behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Popular Culture

Popular culture refers to cultural products, practices, and trends that are

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widely consumed and shared by members of society. It includes music, films, television series, fashion, and social media content that influence people's daily activities, social interactions, and cultural identities. The development of globalization and digital technology has enabled popular culture to spread rapidly across geographical and cultural boundaries. Through digital platforms and social networks, individuals can access various forms of cultural content and interact with global communities (Bora Demir, 2021).

In the context of education, popular culture can serve as an informal source of learning, particularly for students who frequently engage with digital media. English-language songs, movies, television series, and social media content expose learners to vocabulary, expressions, pronunciation, and communication styles used in different contexts. (Levina, 2025) discusses popular culture in relation to applied linguistics, highlighting its relevance to understanding language in contemporary cultural contexts. Similarly, (Placer et al., 2024) examine the relationship between popular culture and English language learning motivation, demonstrating the relevance of popular culture products to students' language-learning experiences.

Nevertheless, exposure to popular culture does not automatically guarantee successful language learning. Students may acquire informal expressions without fully understanding their grammatical structures or appropriate contexts of use. Therefore, popular culture needs to be considered not only as a source of entertainment but also as a potential learning resource that can support meaning full engagement with English.

English Language Learning Strategies

English language learning strategies refer to the approaches and techniques learners use to understand, practice, and develop their English language skills (Lucky, 2025). These strategies may involve listening to English materials, imitating spoken expressions, identifying unfamiliar vocabulary, interpreting meaning from context, and independently practicing language skills. The selection and application of learning strategies may vary according to students' interests, learning preferences, and exposure to English-language materials.

Popular culture provides opportunities for students to practice English

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through activities that are closely connected to their everyday interests. For example, students may listen to English songs to recognize pronunciation and vocabulary, watch films to understand dialogue in context, or follow English-speaking content creators to become familiar with everyday expressions. These activities allow learners to encounter English beyond formal classroom instruction.

(Placer et al., 2024) discuss popular culture products, including films, songs, television series, and novels, in relation to English language learning motivation. Furthermore, (Hidayah & Retpitasari, 2023) examine informal language acquisition through TikTok and the use of English by Indonesian content creators. These studies provide relevant perspectives for understanding how popular culture and digital media may support learners' engagement with English. However, the use of such resources should be accompanied by active learning practices so that students can develop their understanding rather than merely consume content passively**.**

Generation Z and Popular Culture in English Language Learning

Generation Z students have grown up in an environment characterized by widespread access to digital technology, social media, and online communication. These conditions provide opportunities for frequent exposure to English-language content through platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and other digital media. English consequently becomes accessible not only through formal educational activities but also through entertainment and everyday online interactions (Bharti, 2025).

Popular culture may influence how Generation Z students approach English language learning by encouraging them to select materials that match their interests. Repeating expressions from songs, imitating dialogue from films, and interpreting unfamiliar words in social media content are examples of learning activities that may emerge from their engagement with popular culture. Such activities can provide opportunities for independent practice and contextual understanding of English.

Previous studies have explored the relationship between popular culture, digital media, and English language learning. (Telaumbanua et al., 2024) focus on informal language acquisition through TikTok, while (Placer et al., 2024) examine

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popular culture in relation to English language learning motivation. (Purwantoro et al., 2025) also investigate the role of English popular culture in shaping students' language-learning motivation. These studies provide a foundation for examining the educational relevance of popular culture.

However, understanding students' motivation alone does not fully explain how they apply particular strategies when learning English. Further investigation is needed to examine the relationship between exposure to popular culture and the learning strategies adopted by Generation Z students. Therefore, the present study investigates the relationship between popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies among Generation Z university students in Lampung. By examining these variables quantitatively, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the association between engagement with popular culture and students' strategic approaches to English language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study involves two variables, namely popular culture exposure as variable X and English language learning strategies as variable Y. Popular culture exposure (X) in this study is defined as the level of exposure of Generation Z students to various forms of popular culture that use the English language, both through digital media and entertainment media. This exposure includes students' engagement with English-language songs, films or television series, social media, influencers or content creators, and YouTube videos. This variable is measured through a questionnaire that describes the frequency and level of students' engagement in consuming various forms of English-language popular culture content.

English language learning strategies (Y) in this study are defined as the methods or techniques used by students to understand, practice, and develop their English language skills. These strategies include listening to English-language materials, imitating expressions or language use encountered in the content, identifying and learning unfamiliar vocabulary, understanding meaning based on context, and engaging in independent English language learning activities. This variable is measured through a questionnaire that describes the use of various strategies employed by students in the process of learning English.

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The data sources in this study are classified into two main categories: primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents who met the predetermined research criteria (Sugiyono, 2020). The primary data sources consist of active students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, along with several other universities in Lampung. The total population comprised 200 students. Using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%, a final sample of 67 respondents was selected. Data collection relied on a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. This instrument contained a series of standardized statements designed to measure two key constructs: exposure to popular culture and English language learning strategies. Standardized rating scales were employed to ensure consistency in responses and to minimize subjective bias. Respondents were required to meet specific inclusion criteria, including being active university students belonging to Generation Z, active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and having posted or interacted with English-language popular culture content within the past week.

Secondary data were obtained through documentation, relevant literature, and theoretical reviews supporting the research framework. These sources included quantitative research methodology literature, studies examining correlations among variables, and scholarly work related to popular culture, language learning strategies, and Generation Z learning preferences. In addition, academic documentation from the higher education institutions involved in the study was utilized. These documents included institutional data, faculty and study program profiles, and academic policies pertinent to English language learning processes.

Data analysis was conducted using a quantitative approach supported by statistical techniques in IBM SPSS Statistics 24. The analytical procedures were implemented through several systematic stages. First, instrument validity and reliability were assessed to ensure that the questionnaire effectively measured the intended variables. Validity testing employed the Corrected Item–Total Correlation method, in which an item was considered valid when its correlation

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coefficient exceeded the critical r-value at the 5% significance level. Reliability testing utilized Cronbach's Alpha, and the instrument was deemed reliable when the Alpha value was greater than 0.70. These procedures ensured that the measurement instrument demonstrated accuracy, stability, and internal consistency. Descriptive statistics were subsequently generated to provide an initial overview of the research variables. Measures of central tendency and dispersion including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were calculated to analyze the distribution of respondents' scores. Frequency distributions were also produced to identify the levels of popular culture exposure and the frequency of English language learning strategy use among participants. These descriptive outputs offered a foundational profile of respondents' behavioral patterns (Sugiyono, 2020).

Given the correlational design of the study, the primary analysis focused on examining the relationship between the independent variable (popular culture exposure) and the dependent variable (English language learning strategies among Generation Z students). Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation was applied for normally distributed data to determine the strength and direction of the relationship. Correlation coefficients were interpreted using standard criteria ranging from very weak (0.00–0.19) to very strong (0.80–1.00). Statistical significance was determined using the p-value (Sig. 2-tailed), with correlations considered significant when $p < 0.05$.

Finally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to assess differences in the mean use of English learning strategies across groups categorized by varying levels of popular culture exposure. The statistical model employed the ratio F = MS Between / MS Within. Decisions were based on the p-value threshold: a p-value less than 0.05 indicated significant differences between groups, whereas a p-value equal to or greater than 0.05 indicated no significant differences. The ANOVA findings complemented the correlational results by identifying variations across respondent groups, thereby strengthening the overall analytical conclusions.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Popular Culture as a Medium for English Learning Strategies

The influence of English-language popular culture plays a significant role in shaping the English language learning strategies of Generation Z students. The findings of this study indicate that popular culture functions not merely as an entertainment medium but as a strategic resource that informs how students approach, process, and practice English. These findings have important implications for the development of learning strategies that are relevant, adaptive, and responsive to the digital-native characteristics of Generation Z learners. In this regard, three central aspects are emphasized: the role of popular culture in shaping learning strategies, the strategic integration of popular culture elements into English language learning, and the pedagogical capacity of teachers to facilitate strategy-based learning (Purwantoro et al., 2025).

The results reveal that English-language popular culture elements—such as songs, television series, movies, social media content, and YouTube videos—are frequently utilized by Generation Z students as informal learning tools. These cultural resources support the development of various English language learning strategies, particularly in listening and speaking skills. Students tend to employ strategies such as repeating song lyrics, imitating dialogues from films, following influencers who use English, and engaging with English content on social media platforms. Such practices enhance active engagement and promote autonomous learning, as students consciously select materials that align with their interests and learning preferences. Moreover, the integration of popular culture facilitates the contextualization of English language learning strategies. Exposure to authentic language use enables students to apply cognitive and compensatory strategies, such as inferring meaning from context and guessing unfamiliar vocabulary based on situational cues. Through interaction with culturally relevant content, students develop metacognitive awareness by monitoring their comprehension and evaluating their progress. Consequently, popular culture not only increases motivation but also strengthens strategic competence, allowing Generation Z

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students to use English more effectively in real-life communicative contexts (Placer et al., 2024).

Impact of Popular Culture on English Learning Strategies

The results of the study derived from the quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires administered to Generation Z university students. The analysis is based on responses obtained from 67 participants who met the established inclusion criteria and represent students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training as well as several other universities in Lampung. The data were systematically processed to examine patterns of popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies, as well as to identify the relationship between these two variables. The findings are organized to reflect the stages of quantitative analysis employed in this study (Prihatini et al., 2025).

Tabel 1. Pretest Validity Test Results

Correlations

		Pretest_1	Pretest_2	Pretest_3	TOTAL
Pretest_1	Pearson Correlation	1	.683**	.659**	.891**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.002	.000
	N	20	20	20	20
Pretest_2	Pearson Correlation	.683**	1	.564**	.863**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.010	.000
	N	20	20	20	20
Pretest_3	Pearson Correlation	.659**	.564**	1	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.010		.000
	N	20	20	20	20
TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.891**	.863**	.856**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	20	20	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tabel 2. Posttest Validity Test Results

Correlations

		Posttest_1	Posttest_2	Posttest_3	TOTAL
Posttest_1	Pearson Correlation	1	.544*	.517*	.855**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013	.020	.000
	N	20	20	20	20
Posttest_2	Pearson Correlation	.544*	1	.613**	.839**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013		.004	.000
	N	20	20	20	20
Posttest_3	Pearson Correlation	.517*	.613**	1	.820**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.004		.000
	N	20	20	20	20
TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.855**	.839**	.820**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	20	20	20	20

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the validity test conducted on 20 respondents, all items in the pre-test and post-test instruments were found to be valid. The pre-test instrument

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obtained Pearson correlation coefficients of 0.891 for the first item, 0.863 for the second item, and 0.856 for the third item. Meanwhile, the post-test instrument obtained correlation coefficients of 0.855 for the first item, 0.839 for the second item, and 0.820 for the third item. All correlation coefficients were higher than the r-table value of 0.444, with significance values below 0.05. Furthermore, the reliability test results showed that the pre-test instrument had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.777, while the post-test instrument had a value of 0.837. Both values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating that the pre-test and post-test instruments had adequate internal consistency and were considered reliable. Therefore, both instruments met the validity and reliability criteria for use in the study.

Tabel 3. Pretest Reliability Results

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.777	.791	3

Tabel 4. Posttest Reliability Results

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.837	.839	3

Based on the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha with 20 respondents, the pre-test instrument obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.777 across three items, while the post-test instrument obtained a value of 0.837 across three items. Both values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70. These results indicate that the pre-test and post-test instruments have good internal consistency. Therefore, both instruments are considered reliable and suitable for use in the study to measure the respondents' abilities.

Tabel 5. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

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Popular Culture	67	40	50	44.72	4.738
English Learning	67	60	75	67.44	7.302
Valid N (listwise)	67				

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of 67 respondents, the popular culture exposure variable had a minimum score of 40 and a maximum score of 50, with a mean score of 44.72 and a standard deviation of 4.738. Meanwhile, the English language learning strategies variable had a minimum score of 60 and a maximum score of 75, with a mean score of 67.44 and a standard deviation of 7.302. These results provide an overview of the scores for popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies among the respondents.

Tabel 6. Pearson Correlation Test

Correlations

		Popular Culture	English Learning
Popular Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.983**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	67	67
English Learning	Pearson Correlation	.983**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	67	67

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The results of the Pearson correlation test indicate a very strong positive relationship between popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies. Based on the SPSS output, the Pearson correlation coefficient was r = 0.983 with a total of 67 respondents. The significance value of $p < 0.001$ indicates that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant at the 1% significance level. Thus, higher levels of popular culture exposure are associated with higher scores on English language learning strategies among the respondents. However, because this study employed a correlational research design, the results indicate a relationship rather than a causal effect between the two variables.

Tabel 7. ANOVA Test

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2334.722	34	2334.722	340.283	.000

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Within Groups	109.778	33	6.861		
Total	2444.500	67			

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in English language learning strategies based on varying levels of popular culture exposure among Generation Z students. The analysis was performed using data from 67 respondents and aimed to strengthen the correlational findings by assessing differences across exposure groups. The ANOVA results indicate that the between-groups sum of squares is 2334.722 with 34 degrees of freedom, while the within-groups sum of squares is 109.778 with 33 degrees of freedom. The corresponding mean square values are 2334.722 for between groups and 6.861 for within groups. The analysis yielded an F-value of 340.283, which reflects a substantial ratio of variance between groups relative to variance within groups. Moreover, the significance value is $p = 0.000$, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in English language learning strategies across different levels of popular culture exposure. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference among groups is rejected.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between popular culture exposure and English language learning strategies among Generation Z students. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.983$ with a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating that students who reported higher levels of exposure to English-language popular culture also tended to report higher levels of English language learning strategies. This finding suggests that engagement with various forms of English-language popular culture, such as songs, films, television series, social media, influencers, and other digital content, is closely associated with the ways in which students engage in and apply strategies for learning English.

However, this finding should be interpreted within the scope of the

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correlational research design employed in this study. Therefore, the strong correlation identified between the two variables does not establish a causal relationship or demonstrate that popular culture exposure directly causes changes in students' English language learning strategies. Instead, the findings provide empirical evidence of a strong association between the two variables and highlight the potential relevance of English-language popular culture as a contextual factor in students' English learning experiences. Further research using experimental, longitudinal, or other research designs is recommended to examine the nature of this relationship more deeply and to determine whether exposure to popular culture may contribute to the development of English language learning strategies over time

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