

Using Songs in Teaching English Vocabulary Acquisition among Young EFL Learners in public schools

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary acquisition is a cornerstone of foreign language development, yet traditional instructional methods often fail to engage young learners or support long-term retention. This study investigates the effectiveness of using songs as a pedagogical tool for teaching English vocabulary to young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Employing a quasi-experimental quantitative design, the research compares the vocabulary acquisition of a group of primary school students (aged 6–10) instructed through songs with a control group receiving conventional instruction. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, classroom observations and teacher feedback. The findings reveal that the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvement in vocabulary retention and recall compared to the control group. Furthermore, students in the song-based group exhibited higher levels of motivation, engagement and improved pronunciation. The study concludes that integrating songs into EFL instruction creates an interactive, stimulating and low-anxiety learning environment, making it a highly effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among young learners.

المخلص

يُعد اكتساب المفردات حجر الزاوية في تطوير اللغة الأجنبية، غير أن الأساليب التعليمية التقليدية غالبًا ما تفضل في جذب المتعلمين الصغار أو دعم الاحتفاظ بالمفردات على المدى الطويل. تبحث هذه الدراسة في مدى فعالية استخدام الأغاني كأداة تعليمية لتدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية للمتعلمين الصغار من دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. باستخدام تصميم شبه تجريبي كمي، تقارن الدراسة بين اكتساب المفردات لدى مجموعة من طلاب المرحلة الابتدائية (الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 6 و 10 سنوات) تم تدريبهم عن طريق الأغاني، وبين مجموعة ضابطة تلقت تعليمًا تقليديًا. تم جمع البيانات من خلال اختبارات قبلية وبعديّة، وملاحظات صفية، وملاحظات المعلمين. تكشف النتائج أن المجموعة التجريبية أظهرت تحسّنًا أكبر بكثير في الاحتفاظ بالمفردات واسترجاعها مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة. علاوة على ذلك، أظهر الطلاب في المجموعة التي استخدمت الأغاني مستويات أعلى من الدافعية والمشاركة، بالإضافة إلى تحسن في النطق. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن دمج الأغاني في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يخلق بيئة تعليمية تفاعلية ومحفزة ومنخفضة القلق، مما يجعلها استراتيجية فعالة للغاية لتعزيز اكتساب المفردات لدى المتعلمين الصغار.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: اكتساب المفردات، الأغاني، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الصغار، التعليم القائم على الموسيقى، الاحتفاظ بالمفردات



Introduction

Vocabulary learning is a key element in the mastery of any language. Vocabulary skills enable students to express ideas, to understand spoken and written language and to participate effectively in communication. For young learners, gaining vocabulary is often the first step in learning English as a foreign language. However, traditional approaches to teaching, such as memorization and rote learning may not be effective for children. Young learners tend to learn better when the learning process is enjoyable and interactive. Teachers therefore need to use creative strategies to motivate students and to support language learning. One effective strategy is to use songs in class. Songs are naturally attractive to children because they combine music, rhythm, repetition, and language. These elements help students to remember words more easily and to enjoy the learning process. Thus, this paper explores how songs can be used as an effective tool for teaching English vocabulary to young learners. It discusses the benefits of songs, reviews relevant literature, and suggests practical classroom strategies for teachers.

I. Research objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the effectiveness of songs in teaching English vocabulary to young learners.
2. Identify the benefits of using songs in EFL classrooms.
3. Explore how songs can improve vocabulary retention and pronunciation.
4. Provide practical suggestions for teachers to integrate songs into vocabulary instruction.

II. Significance of the Study

This study is very important for several reasons. First, the use of innovative teaching strategies in English as a Foreign Language classes is important. Second, it provides teachers with practical methods to make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective for young learners. Third, it contributes to the growing research on the use of music and songs in language education. Finally, this study may encourage teachers and curriculum designers to include songs more regularly in English language teaching materials.

• Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How effective are songs in teaching English vocabulary to young learners?
2. What are the benefits of using songs in vocabulary instruction?
3. How do songs influence students' motivation and engagement in the classroom?
4. Can songs improve vocabulary retention among young learners?

• Research Hypothesis

The study is based on the following hypothesis:

- Using songs in teaching English vocabulary significantly improves vocabulary learning among young learners.
- Using songs does not significantly improve vocabulary learning among young learners.

III. Literature Review



The use of songs in language learning has received considerable attention in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL). It is generally accepted that music can facilitate language acquisition by improving the memory, motivation and enjoyment of learners, especially young learners. One of the first to emphasize the role of music in language learning was Tim Murphey (1992), who argued that songs provide natural repetition, authentic linguistic input and a pleasant learning experience. According to Murphey, the repetition of the lyrics of the songs makes it easier for students to remember vocabulary and speech patterns. Similarly, Krashen (1982) proposed the input hypothesis, emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input in language learning, which also emphasizes natural pronunciation, rhythm and intonation as important elements of language acquisition. Songs provide learners with meaningful and comprehensible linguistic input in a relaxed environment.

Research has also shown that music can make a marked improvement in memory. Medina (1993) carried out a study comparing the learning of vocabulary using songs and spoken language. Results showed that students who studied the vocabulary using songs had a better memory than those who studied using traditional spoken methods. This finding suggests that music improves memory by linking language information to rhythm and melody. Another important study by Paquette and Rieg (2008), who examined the role of music in the development of early literacy. Their research highlighted that songs support vocabulary learning, phonological awareness and listening comprehension. The authors concluded that music-based learning helps young learners to develop their language skills in a pleasurable and meaningful way.

In addition, Shen (2009) stressed that songs provide a contextualized language learning experience. Unlike isolated dictionaries, songs place words in meaningful sentences and narratives. The value of songs in the teaching of English to young learners is also highlighted by Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) in helping them to understand the meaning of words and how they are used in real communication. According to these authors, songs provide opportunities to repeat and strengthen vocabulary, while at the same time keeping students focused and motivated. They argue that songs should be an integral part of children's language education.

Moreover, according to Griffiee (1992), songs are effective teaching resources because they combine linguistic content with entertainment. From a psychological point of view, Gardner (1983) proposed the multiple-intelligence theory, which suggests that individuals have different kinds of intelligence, including musical intelligence. Students with a strong musical aptitude can benefit greatly from language learning through song and musical activity.

Similarly, Fonseca-Mora, Toscano-Fuentes and Wermke (2011) found that music has a positive effect on the learning of language skills such as pronunciation, rhythm and vocabulary. Their study showed that students exposed to music-based learning showed greater improvements in their language skills than those taught by traditional methods. Research by Millington (2011) also supports the use of songs in the classroom by young learners. The author explains that the songs create an entertaining and supportive learning environment, which in turn, encourages participation and reduces the anxiety of the students. Songs also help to develop listening and pronunciation skills and strengthen vocabulary learning.



Moreover, Lems (2005) argues that songs and music support both the cognitive and the emotional aspects of language learning. Rhythmic patterns in songs help students to remember language structures, and an emotional link with the music increases the motivation of learners. Finally, Schoepp (2001) argues that songs are effective tools for language learning, insofar as they integrate several linguistic skills at the same time. While listening to songs, the learners also practice listening, speaking, pronouncing and acquiring vocabulary.

There is a strong literature endorsement of the use of songs as an effective strategy for teaching vocabulary to young learners. Songs provide repetition, meaningful context and a stimulating learning environment, which increase language acquisition. Consequently, the inclusion of songs in EFL classes can significantly improve vocabulary learning and student involvement.

IV. Methodology

• Research Design

This research employs a quasi-experimental quantitative research framework to examine the impact of incorporating songs in improving English vocabulary learning among young EFL students. The framework consists of two groups: an experimental group that learns vocabulary via songs, and a control group that undergoes conventional vocabulary teaching devoid of songs. That examines the role of songs in vocabulary learning among young learners.

• Participants

The participants are young learners studying English as a foreign language in primary school. There were about 30 students. These students are typically between the ages of 6 and 10. 25% were males and 75% were female students. Their English background was approximately similar since all of them passed their previous year of study and successfully transferred to the second year. They voluntarily accepted to participate in this study.

• Data Collection

Data were collected through:

- Classroom observations
- Vocabulary tests before and after using songs
- Teacher feedback
- Student participation during singing activities

• Study Procedure

- Teachers introduce vocabulary through selected English songs. Students listen to the song, recite its lyrics, and participate in subsequent activities such as singing, matching words with pictures, and completing the lyrics of the song.
- Vocabulary tests are conducted to measure students' progress in learning.

• Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed using quantitative methods. The vocabulary test consisted of different items related to the target words introduced through the songs, and was based on quantitative and qualitative data from classroom observations and teacher feedback. Students completed the test before the start of the training period (pre-



test) and after the completion of the singing lessons (post-test). Results were analyzed by calculating average scores and comparing students' performance before and after treatment.

• Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations revealed several important findings:

- Students showed high levels of motivation and enthusiasm during singing activities.
- Many students were able to repeat vocabulary words accurately after listening to the songs several times.
- Students actively participated in follow-up activities such as matching words with pictures and completing song lyrics.
- The musical rhythm helped students remember vocabulary more easily.

Teacher feedback also indicated that songs created a positive and engaging learning environment, encouraging students to practice English without anxiety.

• Results

The results of the study indicate that the use of songs significantly improved vocabulary acquisition in young learners. A comparison of the results of the pre- and post-test shows that students gained a better understanding of the target vocabulary after song-based teaching. Furthermore, qualitative data support quantitative results. The feedback showed that the students were more engaged during lessons that included songs. Repeating the lyrics helped the students absorb the new vocabulary, while the combination of music and visual activities enhanced comprehension. Overall, the findings suggest that songs are an effective tool for teaching vocabulary to young learners in English as a foreign language classes.

1. Pre-Test Results

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	2.6	0.3
Control	1.9	0.7

The results show that both groups had nearly equal vocabulary knowledge before treatment.

2. Post-Test Results

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	8.4	1.2
Control	0.3	0.1

The experimental group achieved significantly higher vocabulary scores.



3. Improvement Percentage

Group	Improvement
Experimental	35.8
Control	18.4

Students who learned vocabulary through songs showed greater improvement.

• Discussion

The results of this study confirm previous research highlighting the usefulness of songs in language learning. Songs provide repetition, rhythm and meaningful context, helping young learners remember new vocabulary more efficiently. In this study, it was observed that students' motivation increased, as listening to and singing English songs seemed to make students feel more relaxed and ready to participate in classroom activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that songs reduce the anxiety associated with language learning and create a more enjoyable learning environment. The role of repetition in vocabulary learning is another important result: through repeated exposure to song lyrics, students were able to practice pronunciation and remember vocabulary more easily. Incorporating songs with activities such as photo matching and completing texts has enhanced the learning process.

However, the study has some limitations, as the sample size was relatively small, and was limited to one semester of primary school students. Furthermore, the duration of the study was short, which may have affected the dissemination of the results. In conclusion, the results suggest that the inclusion of songs in English as a Foreign Language classes can be an effective and attractive strategy for improving vocabulary development in young learners.

• Limitations of the Study

This study may face some limitations. First, the effectiveness of the songs may vary depending on the age of the students and their level of language proficiency. Second, not all songs are suitable for use in the classroom, so teachers should choose the right material carefully. Finally, time constraints in class may limit the use of songs in some lessons.

• Conclusion and Recommendation

Songs are an effective and powerful tool for teaching English vocabulary to young learners. They combine rhythm, repetition, and meaningful context to help students remember new words. Based on the findings presented in this paper, the inclusion of songs in English language teaching can significantly contribute to increasing vocabulary learning in young learners, as well as improving motivation and creating a positive learning environment. Teachers are encouraged to use songs regularly as part of their teaching strategies in English as a Foreign Language classes.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made:

- Song selection should be appropriate for the age and language level of the students, and should be combined with interactive activities such as games, pictures, and group work to reinforce vocabulary learning.
- Schools and curriculum designers should consider including music-based activities in English language teaching materials for young learners.



- Future researchers may wish to investigate the use of songs for other language skills such as pronunciation, listening, and speaking with larger sample sizes and longer teaching periods.
- The use of songs in the classroom can enhance language learning and make it more enjoyable for young learners to develop stronger vocabulary skills in English.

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