

Enhancing Students' Listening Ability Through English Songs in EFL Learning: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

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Listening is a fundamental skill in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and serves as the foundation for other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. However, listening is often perceived as one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners due to limited exposure to authentic input, unfamiliar pronunciation, fast speech, and low motivation. In response to these challenges, numerous studies have explored the use of English songs as an instructional medium to enhance students' listening ability. This article aims to provide a comprehensive literature review by synthesizing findings from previous empirical studies on the use of songs in listening instruction. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing journal articles related to songs and listening skills in EFL contexts. The findings reveal that songs significantly improve listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, learner motivation, and engagement. Moreover, songs create a positive and low-anxiety learning environment that supports meaningful language learning. Therefore, integrating songs into listening instruction is strongly recommended for English teachers, particularly in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: listening, English songs, EFL learners

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INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language that plays an essential role in international communication, education, technology, science, and business. As a result, English proficiency is increasingly required for academic success and professional development in non-English-speaking countries. In the field of English language education, four core skills are emphasized: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, listening is widely regarded as the most fundamental because it serves as the primary source of language input for learners. Listening provides learners with exposure to authentic language use, enabling them to acquire pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and discourse features naturally. According to theories of second language acquisition, sufficient and comprehensible input is crucial for language development, and listening plays a central role in providing such input. Without adequate listening ability, learners may experience difficulties in developing other language skills, particularly speaking. Despite its importance, listening is often considered one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Many learners struggle to understand spoken English due to several factors, such as rapid speech rate, reduced forms, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, and lack of contextual knowledge. In addition, listening activities in classrooms are frequently perceived as monotonous and stressful, which can reduce learners' motivation and confidence.

These challenges indicate the need for effective and engaging instructional strategies to improve students' listening ability. Teachers are expected to design listening activities that not only provide exposure to authentic language input but also create a supportive and motivating learning environment. One instructional medium that has been widely explored in previous research is the use of English songs in listening instruction. Songs are considered authentic materials because they reflect real language use and cultural contexts. They present linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation in an integrated and meaningful way. Moreover, songs are enjoyable and familiar to learners, which can help reduce anxiety and increase motivation in listening activities. Music has also been shown to have positive effects on memory and emotional engagement, making it a potentially powerful tool in language learning.

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the use of English songs to enhance students' listening ability in various educational contexts, including primary schools, secondary schools, and higher education institutions. These studies report positive outcomes related to listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, and learner motivation. However, the findings are dispersed across different journals and research settings, making it difficult for teachers and researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of songs in listening instruction. Therefore, this article aims to provide a comprehensive literature review on the use of English songs to enhance students' listening ability in EFL contexts. By synthesizing findings from previous studies, this review seeks to examine the effects of songs on listening comprehension, explore the role of songs in vocabulary development and learner motivation, and identify pedagogical implications for English language teaching. This review is expected to contribute to the existing literature and provide practical insights for English teachers who wish to integrate songs into listening instruction.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Listening Skill in EFL Contexts

Listening is widely recognized as a core component of language acquisition, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Listening is not merely a passive activity of hearing sounds; rather, it is an active and interpretive process that involves decoding linguistic input and constructing meaning based on prior knowledge and contextual cues. Through listening, learners are exposed to pronunciation patterns, stress, intonation, vocabulary usage, and grammatical structures in real communicative contexts.

In EFL learning, listening plays a crucial role as the main source of comprehensible input. Learners who receive sufficient exposure to spoken English are more likely to develop better overall language proficiency. However, listening comprehension is often influenced by several factors, including learners' vocabulary knowledge, familiarity with topics, background knowledge, and listening strategies. Without proper instructional support, many EFL learners struggle to understand spoken English texts, which may hinder their progress in other language skills.

Challenges in Teaching Listening

Teaching listening in EFL classrooms presents various challenges for teachers and learners. One of the main difficulties is the fast pace of spoken English, which makes it difficult for learners to identify individual words and phrases. In addition, reduced forms, connected speech, and different accents further complicate listening comprehension. Learners with limited vocabulary knowledge often fail to grasp the meaning of spoken texts, leading to frustration and low confidence.

Another challenge in listening instruction is related to students' affective factors, such as anxiety, boredom, and lack of motivation. Traditional listening activities that rely heavily on textbooks or monotonous audio recordings may fail to engage learners. As a result, students may perceive listening as a stressful and difficult skill, which negatively affects their learning outcomes. These challenges highlight the need for innovative and engaging listening materials that can support both cognitive and affective aspects of listening learning.

Songs as Authentic Materials in Language Learning

Songs are commonly categorized as authentic materials because they are created for real life communication rather than for pedagogical purposes. Authentic materials are believed to expose learners to natural language use and meaningful contexts. English songs present language in an integrated form, combining lyrics with melody, rhythm, and emotional expression. This combination makes songs particularly suitable for language learning, especially in listening instruction.

Songs provide repeated exposure to linguistic input, which is essential for developing listening comprehension. The repetitive nature of song lyrics helps learners recognize sounds, words, and phrases more easily. In addition, the melody and rhythm of songs support memory retention and facilitate recall of language forms. These characteristics make songs an effective medium for helping learners process spoken English more efficiently.

Songs, Affective Filter, and Motivation

Affective factors play a significant role in second language acquisition. Learners who experience high levels of anxiety or low motivation may struggle to benefit from listening input. Songs have been

found to create a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, which can lower learners' affective filters and enhance their willingness to engage in listening activities. Music has the potential to evoke positive emotions and increase learners' interest in learning. When students enjoy listening activities, they are more likely to pay attention and participate actively. Previous studies suggest that the use of songs in listening instruction can increase learners' motivation, reduce anxiety, and foster positive attitudes toward learning English. These affective benefits contribute to improved listening performance and overall learning experiences.

Songs and Listening Achievement

The integration of songs into listening instruction has been shown to positively influence students' listening achievement. By providing authentic input and engaging learning experiences, songs help learners develop better listening strategies and comprehension skills. Learners exposed to songs often demonstrate improvement in identifying main ideas, specific information, and overall meaning in spoken texts. Moreover, songs support the development of pronunciation awareness, including stress and intonation patterns. Improved pronunciation awareness enhances learners' ability to recognize spoken words during listening tasks. Consequently, the use of songs contributes not only to listening comprehension but also to broader aspects of language proficiency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a library research method or literature review. The data sources consist of journal articles that focus on the use of English songs to enhance students' listening ability. The articles were selected from various academic journals and repositories based on their relevance to the topic.

The data analysis procedure involved several steps. First, relevant articles were identified and selected based on predetermined criteria, including focus on listening skills, use of songs as instructional media, and EFL learning contexts. Second, the selected articles were carefully read to extract key information such as research objectives, participants, research design, instructional procedures, and findings. Third, the extracted data were categorized into thematic areas, including listening comprehension, vocabulary development, motivation, instructional media, and students' perceptions. Finally, the findings were synthesized to draw general conclusions about the effectiveness of songs in listening instruction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Songs on Listening Comprehension

Numerous empirical studies have reported that the integration of English songs into listening instruction leads to significant improvement in students' listening comprehension. Learners exposed to song-based listening activities demonstrate better ability to identify main ideas, specific information, and overall meaning in spoken texts (Rahmawati & Putra, 2021; Sari, 2022). Songs provide repeated exposure to spoken English, allowing learners to process sounds, stress patterns, and intonation more effectively. The melody and rhythm of songs support learners in segmenting spoken input and predicting meaning. This finding aligns with studies indicating that repetition and musical patterns facilitate auditory processing and comprehension (Hidayat, 2020). As a result, students become more confident in handling listening tasks and show improved listening performance compared to those taught using conventional listening materials.

Songs and Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary knowledge is a crucial factor influencing listening comprehension. Several studies indicate that songs play a significant role in enhancing learners' vocabulary acquisition. Through song lyrics, students are exposed to new words and expressions in meaningful contexts, which supports incidental vocabulary learning (Nurhayati & Lestari, 2021). The repetition of lyrics reinforces word recognition and retention, making vocabulary learning more effective. Improved vocabulary knowledge enables learners to understand spoken texts more easily. Studies reveal that students who learn listening through songs demonstrate better word recognition and lexical comprehension, which directly contributes to improved listening ability (Pratama, 2020). Therefore, songs function not only as listening materials but also as a medium for vocabulary development.

Songs and Learner Motivation

Motivation is widely recognized as a key determinant of success in language learning. The reviewed studies consistently show that the use of songs increases students' motivation and engagement in listening activities (Dewi & Ananda, 2019). Music creates a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, encouraging students to participate actively and attentively. Songs help reduce learners' anxiety during listening activities. When students feel relaxed and emotionally engaged, they are more willing to take risks and focus on understanding spoken English (Siregar, 2021). This reduction in anxiety contributes to a positive learning experience and enhances listening outcomes.

Songs as Authentic and Technology Supported Learning Media

Many studies emphasize that songs are authentic materials that reflect real language use and cultural contexts. Authentic materials are believed to provide learners with exposure to natural language, which is essential for developing listening competence (Utami, 2022). The integration of songs through digital media, such as audio recordings and online platforms, further enhances listening instruction. Technology-supported learning allows learners to access songs easily and practice listening independently outside the classroom. Studies show that students who engage in autonomous listening practice using songs demonstrate better listening improvement and higher motivation (Kurniawan, 2023). Thus, combining songs with technology creates flexible and effective listening learning opportunities.

Students' Perceptions of Using Songs in Listening Instruction

Students' perceptions play an important role in determining the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Research findings indicate that most learners hold positive perceptions toward the use of songs in listening instruction. Students report that songs make listening activities more enjoyable and help them understand spoken English more easily (Wulandari & Hasanah, 2020). Positive learner perceptions suggest that songs enhance not only listening ability but also students' attitudes toward learning English. When learners perceive listening activities as enjoyable and meaningful, they are more likely to engage actively and achieve better learning outcomes.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this literature review have several pedagogical implications for English language teaching. First, teachers are encouraged to integrate songs into listening instruction as a complementary teaching medium. Songs can be used at different stages of the lesson, such as warming-up activities, main

listening tasks, or reinforcement activities. Second, teachers should carefully select songs that are appropriate for students' proficiency levels, learning objectives, and cultural backgrounds. Clear instructions and well-designed listening tasks are essential to maximize the benefits of using songs in the classroom. Third, the integration of technology can enhance the effectiveness of using songs in listening instruction. Digital platforms enable learners to access authentic listening materials and practice listening independently, thereby increasing exposure to English outside the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive literature review, it can be concluded that the use of English songs is effective in enhancing students' listening ability in EFL contexts. Songs contribute positively to listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, learner motivation, and engagement. The combination of authentic language input, repetition, and emotional engagement makes songs a powerful instructional medium for listening instruction. Furthermore, songs help create a low-anxiety and enjoyable learning environment, which supports meaningful language learning. Learners who are exposed to song-based listening activities tend to show more positive attitudes toward listening and greater confidence in understanding spoken English. Therefore, English teachers are strongly encouraged to integrate songs into listening instruction as a complementary teaching strategy.

Future research may focus on examining the long-term effects of using songs in listening instruction, comparing the effectiveness of different song genres, and exploring the integration of songs with other instructional approaches in EFL classrooms.

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