

The Effect of Music on Listening Comprehension; A Case Study of High School Students in Zabol

Malek Ahmad Kord

Assistant Professor, Farhangian University

Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchestan) Branch, Iran

Kimiya Mishmast*

B.A. student, Farhangian University

Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchestan) Branch, Iran

Abstract

Over the past few decades, Music has been widely praised for its effectiveness in enhancing language learning, particularly in the development of listening skills. Recently, educators and researchers alike have hailed the benefits of using music as a tool for teaching various language skills. The rhythmic patterns and melodic structure of songs can captivate students' attention, making the learning process more engaging and memorable. Considering the effective role of music in teaching different language skills, the main goal of this research is to investigate the effect of music on students' listening skills. To reach the goal of this study, Two classes of 30 female students of a high school in Zabol city were randomly selected. One class was considered as the control group and the other class as the experimental group. After conducting the pre-test for both classes and ensuring about the homogeneity of two classes, the treatment was administered to the experimental group and the post-test was taken from both groups. SPSS version 27 software was used for data analysis and Paired Samples Test calculation. The results showed a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in the post-test. At the end, The results may be related to the fact that the inclusion of songs in the language education curriculum is an essential contribution to the development of all language skills, especially listening comprehension.

Keywords: Listening Comprehension, Music for listening comprehension

1. Introduction

Listening is a skill that appears to be passive, but it is not. It does not only listen to what the speaker says; it also processes what he or she hears. As a result, it is an essential skill for studying a second or foreign language. Furthermore, Harmer classifies listening as a receptive skill and includes it in the sub-skill category, noting that there are differences how people understand for specific and general information through their listening [1].

Listening is seen as an important skill that must be acquired. The quality of a person's relationships with others is heavily influenced by how effectively they listen. Listening skills must also be mastered in order to establish effective communication. Individuals must understand the meaning of the messages delivered by their partners when conversing in order to develop effective communication skills. Listening skills are required to absorb the message delivered by others [10]. references Laurent's (2000) assertion that 'it is impossible not to communicate'. Without the ability to listen, communication is impossible. This statement is consistent with Burnard's (1992), mentioned in Kirwan (2009), who believes that hearing and attending are the two most crucial aspects of communication [8].

L2 students frequently complain about boring English classes. Iranian teachers frequently use the old way of listening, which is very tedious for learners. Including songs and music in class is an effective way to make English classes more engaging and motivational. Listening comprehension is challenging for the majority of L2 learners, from young children to adults. Despite spending years learning English, many graduate students still have poor listening comprehension. They appear to have continued their education [6].

According to [13], new English teachers have recognized the effectiveness of song and music in language classes. The statement demonstrates how teachers can use song as a medium to help students overcome their listening difficulties and improve their listening skills. Songs can also be used to teach English in creative ways because they provide a break from the textbook and workbook. It's new and interesting to them. As a result of this situation, they will be motivated, particularly in learning to listen [8].

Music is seen as a tool used by teachers to help them achieve educational goals. The foreign language teacher can use music to capture students' attention and increase their understanding of the target language through rhythm and musical cadence [2]. It is important to note that song repetition is necessary, and the author suggests using other pedagogical methods in conjunction with music [4].

Another study found that music can help students identify vocabulary and syntax in texts and conversations simply by listening and comprehending. Furthermore, we have argued that this approach can reduce anxiety and increase motivation in students while also encouraging the use of effective language learning strategies [4].

1.1. Listening Comprehension

Several researchers have defined listening comprehension, including Gary Buck, who provided a very clear definition. According to [3], "listening comprehension is an active process of constructing meaning that is done by applying knowledge to the incoming sound" in which "a number of different types of knowledge are involved: both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge." He assumed that comprehension is affected by a wide range of variables, and that potentially any characteristic of the speaker, the situation, or the listener can affect the comprehension of the message [9].

Listening is one of the four basic English language skills. It appears that the other skills are writing, reading, and speaking. These basic skills are divided into two categories: receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Listening is the activity of paying attention to the speaker and attempting to extract meaning from what is said [12]. Listening is the most important language skill and a component of communication. By listening, we can share our ideas with others. According to Brown (2001:24), "Listening is the major component in language learning and teaching because in the classroom learners listen more than they speak." It means that listening is an important skill in everyday life (Hidayat, 2013).

Listening is commonly regarded as the most difficult skill. This is because ELT teachers typically prioritize speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students understand that listening comprehension is difficult to learn, but they mostly ignore it. This becomes an issue in the field of education, particularly among students. Furthermore, the situation worsened as people assumed that just because someone can speak well, they can communicate well. In social situations, some people believe that learning English is demonstrated by their ability to speak, write, and read. Actually, someone's language skills are determined by their listening ability. Wilt (1990) found that people listen to 45 percent of the time they communicate [8].

1.2. Music for Listening Comprehension

Due to the existence of problems in the listening teaching process, such as the high speed of the audio file for students to understand, the students' limited range of vocabulary, their misunderstanding of the meaning of the message, and more importantly, the students' boredom due to the lack of use of appropriate techniques, has made teaching this language skill very difficult compared to other language skills. The students feel bored when the listening class always proposes the same kind of audio. Therefore, one of the methods that the teachers can be used is using a music in teaching listening. Using a music or song, it will make the students interested in joining the listening class [8].

According to [11], songs are effective motivators for L2 learners to learn English. They can help L2 learners improve their listening and speaking skills while also teaching them pronunciation, rhythm, grammar, and vocabulary. Furthermore, songs frequently provide variety and change from routine, repetitive classroom activities to a fun and lively atmosphere in class, as [16] shows that songs can create a relaxing, entertaining, and non-threatening classroom environment, and L2 learners will be more open to learning in this regard. According to Maley (1987), songs contain a variety of elements that can help students remember information, including sounds, poems, and melodies. It means that songs can enhance functionality in English Language Teaching (ELT). When a student listens and memorizes a song involved in the class, the lyrics are embedded in his long-term memory [6].

There is strong practical evidence to support the use of songs in the English language classroom [18]. There is also an increasing body of research confirming that songs are an effective tool in SLA [17, 18]. The casual nature of singing-based learning can help promote a productive environment in the classroom, lowering the affective filter and increasing the potential for language acquisition [19]. Furthermore, according to Papa and Lantorno (1989), there is another reason why teachers introduce songs in the classroom: "singing is certainly one of the activities which generates the greatest enthusiasm and is a pleasant and stimulating approach to the culture of foreign people." L2 learners may feel more comfortable singing along to song lyrics than they do speaking in an L2, which boosts confidence. Additionally, songs can be used to introduce a variety of colloquial language. Finally, most lyrics must be interpreted, and regular practice can improve prediction and comprehension abilities [6].

Songs are one type of listening activity with significant potential. Music and songs are essential components of growth and learning. Songs have the advantage of being entertaining and engaging for students. There are numerous benefits to using songs in the classroom. The teacher can address the needs of teenagers in the classroom by using contemporary popular songs that they are already familiar with. Songs are highly memorable and motivating for students. The most important aspect of a song is repetition. Songs contain language patterns, improve listening skills, pronunciation, and rhythm, and create a fun environment. In addition, songs are extremely beneficial activities. It may be used at any stage [8].

For the last two decades, L2 methodology has actively supported the integration of music and songs in the classroom [14]. Some researchers [5, 7, 15] argue that music and its types such as songs and chants are used in class for methodological purposes. As a result, we can conclude that songs have the power and influence not only on our physical and mental conditions, but also on a positive attitude toward L2 learning; they "recharge" our minds. Positive attitude is required for a successful learning environment. Positive energy confirmation and confidence in the L2 learner's ability create a welcoming environment for students in the classroom [6].

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using music on listening comprehension based on theoretical and background information and the amount of students' learning when the teacher uses music and songs to teach listening skills compared to when the teacher uses normal audio file. Also, in addition to the previous cases, evaluating the effect of music on drawing students' attention to the lesson, reducing anxiety, and increasing their enthusiasm for teaching this skill compared to when music is not used.

2. Research Question

Considering the significance of teaching listening comprehension and based on the presented information, the following research question put forward:

- To what extent can music affect the listening comprehension of the EFL learners?

3. Research Hypothesis

Music has no significant impact on the listening comprehension of EFL learners.

4. Methodology

To complete the information and get the answer to the hypothesis question, this research was conducted using the quantitative method. Two control and experimental groups were used in this research, and both groups, jointly, were subjected to a pre-test at the beginning of the process to determine the homogeneity of the participants, at the end, they were subjected to a post-test to determine the result. The research used quasi experimental design.

4.1. Participants

60 female students were selected as a sample of this study from the population of a high school in Zabol. These 60 students were selected from two classes of 30 students by applying purposive sampling. One of these two classes was selected as the control group and the other as the experimental group and both were tested.

4.2. Instruments

In this research, the following are used as instruments:

4.2.1. IELTS based listening test

In this research, the IELTS test is used for designing pre-test and post-test to evaluate students' mastery of listening comprehension. The designed tests, both, include 30 four-choice questions, and their similar 50-question version has already been implemented as a pilot test. In addition, the validity and reliability of these tests have been determined, and their reliability indexes were found to be 0.76 for the pre-test and 0.81 for the post-test.

4.2.2. Music Playlist

A playlist with instrumental music tracks of similar tempo and genre was prepared for use in the experimental class and normal audio file for textbooks for use in control class.

4.3. Data Collection

First, the experimental class and the control class were both subjected to a pre-test and their homogeneity was determined. All of them were located at the same proficiency level in listening comprehension, i.e. elementary. Then the experimental class was given music as treatment and the control class was taught with conventional methods and using normal audio files. At the end, the post-test was conducted in both classes and the results obtained from this test in the experimental and control classes were compared and analyzed to find out its significance.

4.4. Data Analysis

After performing the calculations and making sure that the instrument is valid and reliable, in order to reach a convincing answer to the question of this research, the performance of the control group and the experimental group should be compared in the post-test. Therefore, the t-test should be taken and the mean scores in the groups should be compared. For this purpose, SPSS version 27.0 software was used in this research and the data and scores obtained from the post-test were entered into this software to calculate the paired sample t-test to determine the effect of using music on the listening comprehension.

5. Results

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for control (wmg) and experimental (mg) groups in the pre-test

		mg	wmg
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		36.6333	36.4333
Std. Deviation		14.07978	15.54678
Minimum		12.00	11.00
Maximum		61.00	68.00

The results from the data in Table 1 have shown that the mean of the control group and the experimental group in the pre-test are very close to each other, and the mean difference between these two groups is reported to be about 0.2, which indicates the existence of homogeneity and similar levels in the listening comprehension of the students of the two groups. Also, the difference in standard deviation in the two groups is low (1.47), which indicates similar levels of consistency or reliability in the data set.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for control (wmg) and experimental (mg) groups in the post-test

		mg	wmg
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		68.3333	33.7667
Std. Deviation		16.36087	15.48900
Minimum		39.00	9.00
Maximum		98.00	69.00

their mean in the post-test to 34.57, and even between their maximum and minimum scores, a significant difference can be seen, which indicates the effectiveness of the treatment on the experimental group.

Table 3: Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences								
95% Confidence Interval of the								
Difference								
pair	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
Mg_wmg	34.56667	18.00131	3.28657	27.84487	41.28847	10.518	29	<.001

In addition to the statistical information reviewed so far, the results of the paired samples test also have shown that since the value of $p < 0.001$ has been obtained, the difference between the mean of the two groups in the post-test is a significant difference. ($df=29$, $t=10.51$) it implies that the null hypothesis is rejected; the two samples are from the same population and there is a significant difference between the two groups before and after receiving treatment. This result implies that the experimental and control groups are different in terms of their ability after treatment.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Having analyzed the data, to answer the research question to what extent music can affect the listening comprehension of the EFL learners. The findings revealed that incorporating music on listening comprehension had a significant positive impact on the participants' understanding and performance, as it was shown before, the mean scores of the experimental group after treatment revealed a significant difference with the control group. The outcomes of the present study are in line with the findings of studies like Arleo, (2000) and Hidayat, (2013).

One possible explanation for these results could be the power of music to engage learners both emotionally and cognitively. Music has the ability to evoke emotions and create memorable experiences, which can enhance the learning process. By associating language input with musical elements, such as rhythm, melody, and tone, learners may find it easier to remember and comprehend spoken content. Additionally, music can provide context and cultural references that help learners connect with the language on a deeper level, thus improving their overall comprehension skills.

Furthermore, the type of music used in the study may have played a significant role in determining its effect on listening comprehension. Upbeat and fast-paced music may have different effects compared to slow, calming melodies. Future studies could delve deeper into the role of music genre, tempo, and lyrics in influencing comprehension levels.

On the basis of above results, the following conclusions can be listed:

1. Incorporating music into language learning enhances listening skills and overall language proficiency. By engaging learners in music-based activities, educators create an immersive learning environment that stimulates auditory processing, cultural awareness, and emotional connections.
2. Music integration in teaching listening skills can significantly improve language learners' capacity to remember information. The cadence and harmony found in music can boost memory retention by fostering a more immersive and participatory learning environment. By associating language material with musical prompts, learners are better equipped to recall vocabulary, expressions, and speech patterns. Music evokes emotions and activates various brain regions, thereby enhancing the efficiency and memorability of the

learning process. Furthermore, songs frequently employ repetitive formats and memorable melodies, which aid in solidifying newly acquired language principles.

3. Music integration in the teaching of listening skills has the potential to engage language learners effectively by establishing a lively and interactive learning atmosphere. By incorporating music, learners are encouraged to concentrate on recognizing different sounds, rhythms, and tones, thereby improving their listening comprehension. The inherent rhythmic structures and melodies of music naturally attract learners, resulting in a more enjoyable and participatory learning experience. This method not only enhances students' eagerness to enhance their listening skills but also fosters a stronger bond with the language due to the emotional resonance that music often conveys. Ultimately, the utilization of music in teaching listening skills can spark a love for language acquisition and enhance overall proficiency.
4. Music is a valuable resource for foreign language learners to enhance their listening skills by providing authentic language samples in a rhythmic and melodic context. Listening to songs in the target language helps learners become more attuned to pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, which are essential components of natural speech. This exposure to music aids in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-life communication, enabling learners to become familiar with colloquial expressions, idiomatic language, and cultural references commonly found in songs.
5. Incorporating music into teaching listening skills can have a profound impact on reducing anxiety among language learners. Music has the power to create a calm and engaging learning environment, helping students to feel more relaxed and open to the learning process. The rhythmic patterns and melodic structures in music can aid in improving concentration and focus, diverting learners' attention away from their anxious thoughts. Additionally, music can evoke positive emotions and memories, promoting a sense of joy and comfort during the language learning experience. By integrating music into listening activities, educators can create a more enjoyable and supportive atmosphere that boosts learners' confidence and overall well-being, allowing them to effectively develop their listening skills while alleviating feelings of anxiety and worry.
6. Music is a universal language that crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. Exposing learners to diverse musical genres and styles enriches their listening experiences and expands their intercultural competence. This broadens perspectives and leads to more nuanced and empathetic interpretations of spoken language in real-world communication contexts.

References

- [1] Adawiyah, A. (2017). *The Effectiveness of Popular Songs in Improving Students' Listening Skill*. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta,
- [2] Arleo, A. (2000). Music, song and foreign language teaching. *Cahiers de l'APLIUT*, 19(4), 5-19.
- [3] Buck, G. (2001). What Practitioners says about Listening: Research Implications for the Classroom. *Foreign language annals*, 17, p31.
- [4] Edwards, N. A. (2019). *Using Music in the Classroom as a Pedagogical Tool*.
- [5] Eken, D. K. (1996). *Ideas for using songs in the English language classroom*. Paper presented at the English Teaching Forum.
- [6] Ghanbari, F., & Hashemian, M. (2014). The effects of English songs on young learners' listening comprehension and pronunciation. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 6(3), 337-345.
- [7] Graham, J. G. (1994). Four Strategies to Improve the Speech of Adult Learners. *TESOL Journal*, 3(3), 26-28.

- [8] Hidayat, A. (2013). The use of songs in teaching students' listening ability. *Journal of English and Education*, 1(1), 21-29.
- [9] Hue, T. T. (2019). An overview of listening skill theories. *Proceedings of Elt Upgrades*, 268-276.
- [10] Kirwan, M. (2009). Veterinary Communication Skills. *Oklahoma: Blackwell Publishing Ltd*.
- [11] Lo, R. S. M., & Li, H. C. F. (1998). *Songs Enhance Learner Involvement: Materials Development*. Paper presented at the Forum.
- [12] Macháčková, E. (2009). *Teaching listening*. Masaryk University, Faculty of Education,
- [13] Murphey, T. (1990). Song and music in language learning. *Bern: Peter Lang*.
- [14] Orlava, N. (2003). Helping Prospective EFL Teachers Learn How to Use Songs in Teaching Conversation Class. *The Internet TESL Journal*, IX, 3.
- [15] Saricoban, A., & Metin, E. (2000). Songs, verse and games for teaching grammar. *The internet TESL journal*, 6(10), 1-7.
- [16] Schoepp, K. (2001). Reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom. *The internet TESL journal*, 7(2), 1-4.
- [17] Schön, D., Boyer, M., Moreno, S., Besson, M., Peretz, I., & Kolinsky, R. (2008). Songs as an aid for language acquisition. *Cognition*, 106(2), 975-983.
- [18] Wallace, W. T. (1994). Memory for music: Effect of melody on recall of text. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 20(6), 1471.
- [19] York, J. (2011). Music and MEXT: How songs can help primary school English teachers teach and their students learn. *The language teacher*, 35(4), 62-67.