CASE STUDIES ON VOCABULARY MASTERY IN EFL LEARNERS THROUGH ENGLISH SONG EXPOSURE

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Abstract: This literature review explores the role of English songs as an effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary mastery among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Drawing on evidence from various studies, it highlights how song lyrics contribute to vocabulary learning and retention. Key factors identified include the repetitive nature of songs, the contextualized language they provide, and their ability to evoke emotional engagement, all of which enhance cognitive processing and support long-term memory retention. The review discusses practical approaches for integrating music into teaching practices, offering educators strategies to leverage songs as a dynamic tool for language instruction. Furthermore, it identifies areas for future research, such as investigating the influence of cultural relevance, learner preferences, and technological tools, to optimize the use of music in diverse educational settings and maximize its potential as a language-learning resource.

INTRODUCTION

Mastering vocabulary is essential for achieving fluency and comprehension in a foreign language, making it a critical focus for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners (Nation, 2020). However, traditional methods of vocabulary teaching often fail to sustain long-term engagement and retention, particularly for learners with limited exposure to authentic language contexts (Schmitt, 2020). Innovative approaches, such as incorporating music into learning practices, have garnered attention as a means to address these challenges by providing an enjoyable and immersive learning experience (Alptekin, 2021). Vocabulary, as defined by Hatch and Brown (1995, p. 1), refers to "a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use." It is a fundamental component of language learning that students must master to acquire a new language. This underscores the importance of prioritizing vocabulary in English learning, as a lack of sufficient vocabulary can hinder students from effectively learning and using the language. McCharthy (2003) highlighted that vocabulary constitutes the largest part of any language course. Similarly, Thornbury (2002) asserted that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without

vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (p. 12). Given the critical role vocabulary plays in both learning and communication, it is essential for teachers to actively support students in expanding their vocabulary knowledge. English songs are increasingly recognized as an effective medium for vocabulary acquisition, blending linguistic input with emotional engagement. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, songs offer a form of comprehensible input that can facilitate language learning when integrated into natural and engaging contexts (Krashen, 2020). Furthermore, the repetitive and rhythmic nature of song lyrics enhances memory retention, while their cultural and contextual elements offer opportunities for deeper linguistic and cultural immersion (Pavia et al., 2019).

Music and songs serve as an excellent language learning resource, integrating culture, vocabulary, listening skills, grammar, and various other linguistic elements into simple and memorable rhymes. For many individuals worldwide, their initial exposure to English often comes through popular song lyrics. Additionally, incorporating music into language classrooms helps create a relaxed and engaging environment, boosting students' attentiveness and motivation to learn (Medina, 1993; Mishan, 2005). Medina (1993) emphasized that a diverse range of useful vocabulary can be acquired through popular songs, while Murphey (1992) highlighted that using students' favorite songs for teaching vocabulary provides countless opportunities for review, a key factor in embedding information into long-term memory. This literature review synthesizes findings from recent case studies on the use of English songs as a pedagogical tool for vocabulary mastery. The objectives are to explore the mechanisms through which songs support vocabulary acquisition, examine their effectiveness across different learner demographics, and provide actionable insights for EFL educators. By addressing the gaps in traditional methods and leveraging the motivational aspects of music, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research advocating for innovative approaches in language education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a case study approach to investigate the role of listening to foreign-language songs in improving English vocabulary mastery among students. The research focuses on ten participants who are English learners with a regular habit of listening to English songs. Research and practice consistently demonstrate the effectiveness of incorporating music and songs in teaching second or foreign languages. This is evident in their widespread use in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms globally. Huy Le (2007) highlighted that both EFL

students and teachers in Vietnam greatly value music as a teaching tool for developing speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Similarly, educators in various countries, including the United States (Baez, 1993), Taiwan (Katchen, 1988), Japan (Moriya, 1988), and Mexico (Domoney & Harris, 1993), have reported the significance and practical benefits of music and related activities in teaching English as a second language (ESL). These participants were selected to represent a diverse range of proficiency levels and learning backgrounds. The primary aim is to evaluate the extent to which exposure to song lyrics contributes to vocabulary acquisition and overall language comprehension. Data collection involves both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Each participant will undergo a questionnaire test of five questions with a Likert scale to assess their understanding of English, especially with a focus on words and phrases that are often found in songs.

Participants' responses will be evaluated using a Likert scale to assess their opinions and experiences related to the development of their English listening skills through podcast consumption. As noted by Joshi (2015), the traditional Likert scale consists of a set of statements (items) tailored to a specific real or hypothetical situation under study, allowing participants to indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Many studies, including Xiaowei (2010), have demonstrated that utilizing different methods to teach vocabulary helps students enhance their word knowledge. Techniques such as using real objects, pictures, storytelling, miming, gestures, and songs are particularly engaging and can make English lessons more stimulating and motivating for young learners. Of these methods, music and songs are considered among the most effective tools. The collected data will be subjected to analytical processing to identify patterns and trends. The effectiveness of using songs as a supplementary tool for vocabulary enhancement will be measured and presented in the form of statistical tables. These tables will provide a clear comparison of vocabulary comprehension before and after the intervention, highlighting any significant improvements linked to the listening practice. Through this case study, the research aims to provide evidence of the effectiveness of integrating music into language learning strategies, offering practical insights for educators and learners seeking innovative methods to enhance English vocabulary acquisition. This methodology not only ensures a focused investigation but also supports a comprehensive analysis of individual learning outcomes within the study's context.

Data collection will be conducted using JASP through descriptive statistical methods, with the WhatsApp application serving as the primary instrument to ensure accessibility and convenience for participants. Online interviews via WhatsApp will feature five core questions designed to investigate participants' engagement with English song lyrics and the application of newly acquired vocabulary in real-life contexts. These questions aim to assess participants' comprehension of song lyrics, focusing on their ability to interpret meaning, identify new vocabulary, and understand phrases within a musical context. Furthermore, participants will be asked to reflect on how these linguistic elements are integrated into their daily conversations, academic activities, or other real-world language interactions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistical analysis highlights participants' perspectives on using English songs to enhance vocabulary acquisition among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The data, presented through mean scores and standard deviations, demonstrate that song lyrics significantly aid vocabulary learning and retention by providing meaningful context. Repetition in songs and emotional engagement are identified as key factors supporting cognitive processing and long-term memory. Furthermore, the findings underscore the need for further research to explore the role of cultural relevance, learner preferences, and technological tools in optimizing the use of songs as language learning aids. Please refer to the table for a detailed breakdown of the findings.

Descriptive Statistics						
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
The use of English songs is an effective strategy to improve vocabulary acquisition among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.	5	0	1.600	0.894	1.000	3.000

Song lyrics can aid vocabulary learning and retention by providing a meaningful context.	5	0	1.600	0.894	1.000	3.000
Factors such as repetition in songs and emotional engagement play an important role in supporting cognitive processing and long-term memory.	5	0	2.200	0.837	1.000	3.000
Further research is needed to explore the influence of cultural relevance, learner preference and technology in the use of songs as language learning tools..	5	0	1.400	0.548	1.000	2.000
Songs can be used dynamically as a tool to improve learning outcomes in English language teaching.	5	0	1.800	0.837	1.000	3.000

Table 1. Analysis data calculation result

The analysis of descriptive statistics provides valuable insights into perceptions regarding the use of English songs as a strategy for vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. The findings suggest a generally positive attitude toward this method, with mean scores indicating varying levels of agreement across the statements. For instance, the use of English

songs as an effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition was perceived positively, with a mean score of 1.60 (SD = 0.894). This result highlights the recognition of songs as a supportive tool in language learning, particularly for vocabulary retention. Similarly, the role of song lyrics in providing meaningful context to aid vocabulary learning and retention received a mean score of 1.60 (SD = 0.894). This finding underscores the importance of contextualized learning environments, as meaningful content facilitates deeper cognitive processing and long-term retention.

In terms of cognitive and emotional factors, the statement addressing the influence of repetition in songs and emotional engagement had a slightly higher mean score of 2.20 (SD = 0.837), reflecting more moderate agreement. This suggests that while many learners acknowledge the role of these factors, there is a degree of variability in their perceived effectiveness, likely due to individual differences in learning preferences and experiences. Interestingly, the lowest mean score (1.40, SD = 0.548) was observed for the statement emphasizing the need for further research into cultural relevance, learner preferences, and technological integration in using songs as a learning tool. This strong agreement highlights an awareness among respondents of the multifaceted nature of song-based language learning and the importance of tailoring approaches to diverse cultural and individual contexts. Finally, the dynamic use of songs as a tool to enhance learning outcomes in English language teaching received a mean score of 1.80 (SD = 0.837), indicating general agreement among participants. However, the slightly higher standard deviation suggests some variation in how respondents view the practicality of implementing this method in different educational settings. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the benefits of integrating music into language learning (e.g., Medina, 1993; Murphey, 1992). The use of songs not only supports vocabulary acquisition but also enhances emotional engagement and cognitive processing. Nonetheless, the variability in responses highlights the need for further research to explore factors such as cultural relevance and technological tools that could optimize the use of songs in EFL learning contexts.

This study's findings emphasize the considerable potential of incorporating English songs as a method to enhance vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. Participants' positive perceptions, reflected in the mean scores, align with the theoretical foundation that supports the use of music in language learning. Songs, particularly those with lyrics, are widely acknowledged as effective tools for language acquisition due to their ability to combine

cognitive, emotional, and contextual elements (Medina, 1993; Murphey, 1992). However, the variations in responses across the statements indicate a need for further exploration of the factors that impact the efficacy of this approach. The strong agreement regarding the idea that songs provide meaningful contexts for vocabulary learning and retention underscores the value of contextualized instruction in second language acquisition. This finding supports Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, which posits that comprehensible and meaningful input is critical for language learning. Lyrics in songs offer relatable and engaging contexts, enabling learners to connect vocabulary with specific meanings and situations. Such connections not only enhance immediate comprehension but also promote long-term retention. Additionally, the repetitive structure of song lyrics reinforces this effect by strengthening memory through repeated exposure.

The moderately positive responses to the role of repetition and emotional engagement present an interesting dimension. While many learners recognize the cognitive advantages of repetition, such as facilitating memory recall and fluency, others may perceive these benefits as limited, possibly due to individual differences in learning preferences. Emotional engagement, which music frequently elicits, is pivotal for boosting motivation and sustaining attention, both of which are essential for effective learning (Hansen & Jensen, 1994). The variability in responses to this aspect suggests that individual differences in musical preferences or emotional resonance with specific songs or genres may influence perceptions. Further investigation into how these personal preferences affect the efficacy of songs in language learning is warranted. The lowest mean score, associated with the statement highlighting the need for more research into cultural relevance, learner preferences, and technological integration, emphasizes the increasing significance of these factors in modern EFL pedagogy. Cultural relevance is particularly important because materials aligned with learners' cultural contexts or interests are more likely to engage them and facilitate meaningful learning. Songs that incorporate culturally relevant themes can bridge linguistic and cultural education, creating a more holistic learning experience. Furthermore, technological advancements, such as karaoke apps, interactive music platforms, and virtual language-learning environments, offer innovative ways to integrate songs into EFL instruction. These tools can be tailored to reflect cultural and individual preferences, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

The high level of agreement on the versatility of songs as teaching tools underscores their perceived adaptability in EFL instruction. Songs can be utilized in diverse activities,

including vocabulary exercises, listening tasks, and creative writing projects, making them a versatile resource. However, the variations in responses indicate that successful implementation depends on factors such as teacher training, curriculum planning, and resource availability. Teachers must be equipped with the skills to choose and apply songs effectively, ensuring alignment with educational objectives and learner needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be made to improve the use of songs in vocabulary acquisition for EFL learners. These recommendations are drawn from both the study's findings and relevant literature. Utilizing Culturally Relevant Songs A key finding in this study was the importance of cultural relevance in language materials. Songs that align with learners' cultural backgrounds or interests can increase engagement and enhance the learning experience. According to Murphy (1992), culturally relevant content helps connect language learning with cultural understanding, enriching the overall learning process. Teachers should select songs that reflect the cultural contexts of their learners or introduce cross-cultural elements to promote exploration. Future research should focus on how cultural context influences vocabulary engagement and retention, which can guide more effective teaching practices.

Integrating Technology in Song-Based Learning With the growing influence of technology, incorporating digital tools can significantly improve the effectiveness of song-based language learning. Interactive music platforms, karaoke apps, and online classrooms are examples of how technology can enhance the learning process. Studies by Herron et al. (2002) suggest that multimedia tools support auditory skills and foster visual engagement, improving overall comprehension. Teachers should consider using these tools to create interactive activities, such as vocabulary quizzes based on song lyrics or virtual discussions. Apps that allow students to manipulate song elements such as adjusting tempo or highlighting key words can provide repeated exposure in various contexts, further reinforcing learning.

Personalizing Learning Through Music Preferences The findings indicate that emotional engagement and individual preferences impact the effectiveness of song-based learning. Research by Hwang and Chen (2017) shows that learning experiences that resonate emotionally with students are more likely to be successful. Teachers should consider the musical preferences of their learners and explore different genres to engage various emotional

triggers. Allowing students to choose songs or share their favorites can increase motivation and involvement in vocabulary-related activities. Promoting Repetition and Active Participation Repetition is a highly effective method for reinforcing vocabulary retention, as evidenced in this study and supported by language acquisition theories (Medina, 1993). Listening to the same song repeatedly strengthens memory recall. Teachers can take advantage of this by incorporating activities like fill-in-the-blank exercises, vocabulary matching games, or gap-filling tasks centered around words from the song lyrics. Encouraging students to sing along or rewrite song lyrics in their own words can further solidify vocabulary learning and deepen comprehension.

Teacher Training and Professional Development The success of using songs in language teaching is highly dependent on teachers' ability to integrate songs effectively into the curriculum. The variations in responses observed in this study suggest a need for teacher training in selecting appropriate songs, designing related activities, and using songs to meet educational objectives. Teacher development programs should cover both the pedagogical benefits of using music in language learning and provide practical guidance on incorporating songs into lessons focused on vocabulary, grammar, and cultural understanding. Further Research on Individual Learning Preferences Since individual learning preferences play a role in the effectiveness of song-based learning, further research should explore how factors such as musical tastes, emotional responses, and cognitive styles affect vocabulary acquisition. Understanding these factors in greater detail can lead to more personalized and effective teaching strategies. Specifically, research should focus on how familiarity with certain songs or genres influences engagement and vocabulary retention, providing insights into how to optimize song-based learning.

Curriculum Design and Adaptation This study's findings highlight the versatility of songs as a teaching tool, suggesting that they can be applied to a variety of activities across the curriculum. Teachers should experiment with creative ways to incorporate songs into different tasks, such as listening comprehension, writing exercises, or group discussions. For instance, songs can be used to inspire debates or creative writing projects, providing students with opportunities to use new vocabulary in context. When designing curricula, educators should ensure that songs are used purposefully to align with learning objectives, offering both familiar and challenging vocabulary to support comprehensive language development.

In conclusion, the findings of this study validate the advantages of using music in language learning, as highlighted in existing literature, while identifying areas for further exploration. Specifically, cultural relevance, technological integration, and learner preferences merit deeper investigation. Addressing these aspects can enhance the effectiveness of songs as a language-learning resource, providing EFL learners with a stimulating and contextually rich environment for vocabulary development. Future research should adopt a multidimensional approach to examine the interplay of these factors and their impact on the overall learning experience.

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