DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH MUSIC AND SONGS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the effectiveness of using music and songs as innovative pedagogical tools for developing students' listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition in English language classes. Music plays an important role in language learning by creating an engaging educational environment, increasing students' motivation, and providing opportunities for meaningful exposure to authentic language. The article examines the methodological advantages of integrating English songs into classroom activities, with particular attention to improving listening skills, expanding vocabulary, developing pronunciation, and strengthening long-term retention of lexical items. Various teaching techniques, including gap-filling exercises, lyric reconstruction, vocabulary matching, pronunciation practice, and song-based discussions, are analyzed from a pedagogical perspective.

Key words: English language teaching, listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, music-based learning, songs, innovative teaching methods.

In modern education, the development of effective foreign language teaching methods has become increasingly important due to globalization, technological advancement, and the growing demand for international communication. English language proficiency is widely recognized as an essential skill for academic achievement, professional development, and intercultural interaction. Among the four fundamental language skills, listening comprehension occupies a particularly significant position because it provides learners with linguistic input necessary for successful communication and language acquisition. Despite the importance of listening, many students encounter difficulties understanding spoken English, particularly when exposed to natural speech, unfamiliar accents, connected speech, and various patterns of intonation. Traditional listening activities, which frequently rely on textbook recordings and repetitive comprehension exercises, may not always maintain students' interest or provide sufficient exposure to diverse forms of authentic language. Consequently, English language teachers are increasingly exploring alternative instructional strategies that combine linguistic development with meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences.

One such approach involves incorporating music and songs into the language learning process. Songs represent a valuable source of authentic linguistic material, containing vocabulary, grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, pronunciation patterns, and cultural references. Their rhythmic and melodic characteristics may also support attention, repetition, and the memorization of linguistic information.

Murphey (1992), in his book Music and Song, presents a variety of practical classroom activities demonstrating how songs can be incorporated into foreign language teaching. His methodological work provides teachers with ideas for adapting musical materials to different language levels and educational objectives [1].

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The educational potential of music is particularly relevant to secondary school students, who frequently engage with English-language songs through social media, streaming platforms, and digital entertainment. Integrating familiar musical materials into classroom instruction may create stronger connections between formal learning and students' everyday experiences.

For example, a teacher can select a song containing frequently used vocabulary, introduce unfamiliar expressions before listening, and organize comprehension tasks during and after the activity. Such an approach allows students to encounter vocabulary in meaningful contexts while practicing recognition of spoken language.

The relevance of this article is determined by the need to identify effective and motivating strategies for developing listening comprehension and vocabulary knowledge among English language learners. The main purpose is to examine the pedagogical benefits of music-based instruction and demonstrate practical methods for integrating songs into English language lessons.

Music has long been used as a supplementary resource in foreign language education. Unlike isolated vocabulary lists or mechanical grammar exercises, songs present language through meaningful combinations of sound, rhythm, melody, and context. From a pedagogical perspective, music-based instruction can create opportunities for repeated exposure to language structures and encourage students to participate in listening activities more actively.

The relationship between music and language learning has also attracted the attention of cognitive researchers. Schön and colleagues (2008) investigated the relationship between musical and linguistic information in language acquisition. Their research provides evidence that musical presentation can facilitate certain processes involved in recognizing linguistic patterns and segmenting continuous speech [2].

These findings suggest that music may contribute to language learning through the interaction between auditory perception and linguistic processing.

In English language classrooms, songs can be employed for several instructional purposes, including vocabulary recognition, pronunciation development, listening comprehension, and cultural awareness.

For example, an elementary-level teacher may use a simple song about daily routines to introduce expressions such as wake up, get dressed, have breakfast, go to school, and go to bed. Students listen to the song, identify the expressions, and subsequently use them to describe their own daily activities.

At intermediate levels, more complex songs can be selected to introduce idiomatic language, phrasal verbs, emotional vocabulary, and figurative expressions.

However, the educational effectiveness of music depends on the selection of appropriate materials and the organization of meaningful classroom activities. Simply playing a song without clearly defined learning objectives does not guarantee language development.

Listening comprehension involves recognizing spoken words, identifying meaningful language units, interpreting information, and understanding the speaker's intended message. These processes can become particularly challenging when students encounter unfamiliar pronunciation, rapid speech, or connected language.

Songs may provide a useful supplementary listening resource because they expose learners to different patterns of rhythm, stress, and intonation.

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One practical strategy is the implementation of three-stage listening instruction: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening.

Pre-listening stage

At this stage, teachers prepare students for the listening task by introducing the song's topic, explaining essential vocabulary, and activating learners' background knowledge.

For example, before listening to a song about personal determination, students can discuss questions such as:

- What does it mean to be confident?
- Why is perseverance important?
- How can people overcome difficulties?

These questions encourage students to predict the content and connect the topic with their personal experiences.

While-listening stage

During this stage, students complete structured activities designed to improve listening comprehension.

One common technique is the gap-filling exercise, in which selected words are removed from a short teacher-prepared transcript or an appropriately licensed lyric worksheet.

Practical example: Gap-Filling Activity

Students listen to a song about motivation and complete the following original practice sentences based on its theme.

1. I believe I can achieve my _____. (goals)
2. Every challenge makes me _____. (stronger)
3. I will never _____ up. (give)
4. Confidence helps me overcome my _____. (fears)
5. Hard work is the key to _____. (success)

The teacher plays the selected recording several times and asks students to compare their answers with a partner.

This activity is an illustrative exercise rather than a transcription of a particular commercial song. The teacher should choose audio containing the target expressions or adapt the exercise accordingly.

Post-listening stage

After listening, students discuss the meaning of the song, explain selected vocabulary items, and express their opinions about its message.

Possible discussion questions include:

1. What is the main message of the song?
2. Which expressions are connected with motivation?
3. How does the singer express emotions?
4. What lesson can listeners learn from the song?

These activities encourage learners to move beyond simple word recognition toward interpretation and meaningful communication.

This study suggests that singing can facilitate the short-term memorization of certain foreign language expressions. However, the findings should not be interpreted as proof that singing is always superior to other learning methods or that the same results necessarily apply to all school-age learners.

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Practical example: Listen, Repeat, and Remember

A teacher introduces a short educational chant containing five target expressions.

For example:

I can learn, I can grow.

Every day, my skills will show.

I will try and do my best.

Learning helps me face each test.

Students first listen, then repeat the expressions rhythmically, and finally reproduce them without reading.

The teacher can assess how accurately students remember the phrases immediately after the activity and during a subsequent lesson.

This technique combines listening, pronunciation practice, and retrieval, allowing learners to reinforce vocabulary through multiple forms of engagement.

The use of music and songs in English language education offers valuable opportunities for improving listening comprehension, expanding vocabulary, and increasing student engagement. The theoretical perspectives and empirical studies reviewed in this article indicate that musical materials can support selected aspects of language acquisition, particularly vocabulary learning, verbal memory, and recognition of linguistic patterns.

Song-based activities such as gap-filling exercises, lyric reconstruction, vocabulary matching, pronunciation practice, and group discussions provide opportunities for students to encounter language in meaningful contexts.

However, the effectiveness of these activities depends on the appropriate selection of songs, clearly defined learning objectives, and systematic integration into classroom instruction.

Teachers should combine music-based activities with explicit vocabulary instruction, comprehension tasks, pronunciation practice, and opportunities for independent language use.

In conclusion, music should be considered a valuable supplementary resource rather than a replacement for established language teaching methods. Further classroom-based research is recommended to determine how different types of songs, listening frequencies, and instructional activities influence students' listening comprehension and vocabulary development across proficiency levels.

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