

Melodic Learning: The Role of English Songs in Enhancing Vocabulary Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of using English songs on improving students' vocabulary skills. A quantitative approach was employed with an experimental design, comparing vocabulary acquisition in two groups: an experimental group that learned vocabulary through English songs and a control group that learned through traditional methods. The results show that the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvement in vocabulary recall, retention, and application, suggesting that songs, with their repetitive nature, rhythm, and emotional engagement, are effective tools for vocabulary enhancement. Additionally, the long-term retention data revealed that the vocabulary learned through songs was retained over time and applied in various contexts, highlighting the lasting impact of music-based learning. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative language teaching methods and emphasizes the effectiveness of music in promoting vocabulary acquisition in a dynamic and engaging way.

Keywords: English songs, language learning, vocabulary acquisition

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of music into language learning has gained increasing attention as an effective pedagogical tool. English songs, with their catchy melodies and engaging rhythms, offer an innovative and enjoyable way for students to enhance their language skills (Zamin et al., 2020). One of the key areas where songs have shown promise is in developing vocabulary skills, which are essential for effective communication and comprehension in a second language. Songs not only provide students with exposure to authentic language use but also offer a memorable context for vocabulary acquisition through repetition, rhythm, and rhyme.

Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial component of language learning, as it lays the foundation for reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and effective oral communication. Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction often involve rote memorization or flashcards, which can be monotonous and disengaging for students (Fatimah, 2020). However, research has shown that incorporating music into language learning can make the process more enjoyable and effective. English songs offer an immersive experience where vocabulary is naturally embedded within context, making it easier for students to recall and use new words in real-life situations (Tahir et al.,

2020). Therefore, integrating English songs into vocabulary instruction represents a promising alternative approach to enhance students' engagement and vocabulary learning outcomes.

Previous studies on the use of music in language learning have shown promising results. For example, Ghalebi et al., (2021) found that songs can improve pronunciation, listening skills, and vocabulary retention. Similarly, another study by Fatimah, (2020) highlighted that students who learned vocabulary through songs demonstrated better recall and more frequent use of the target words compared to those who learned through traditional methods. These findings suggest that English songs, with their rhythmic and melodic qualities, can serve as an effective tool for vocabulary acquisition.

Despite these positive outcomes, there is a limited body of research specifically examining the impact of English songs on vocabulary skills in non-native speakers. While studies have explored the use of songs in improving language skills such as listening and pronunciation, fewer studies have focused on their effect on vocabulary retention and usage. This research aims to address this gap by investigating how English songs can be used to enhance students' vocabulary skills, specifically focusing on their ability to recall, retain, and apply new vocabulary learned through song lyrics.

The primary objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of English songs as a tool for vocabulary enhancement in language learners. By examining how students engage with songs and how these songs influence their vocabulary acquisition, this research aims to provide insights into the pedagogical benefits of integrating music into language instruction. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on innovative language teaching methods and provide practical recommendations for teachers looking to.

Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design to explore the effect of using English songs on improving students' vocabulary skills. The main focus was to determine whether the integration of music, particularly English songs, had a significant impact on students' vocabulary acquisition, retention, and use. A pre-test and post-test experimental design was employed to measure students' vocabulary proficiency before and after exposure to English songs. Through this design, the study sought to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of songs in enhancing vocabulary skills in a language learning context.

The participants in this study were 50 students from an intermediate-level English class at a local high school or university. The students were randomly selected and divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group learned vocabulary through English songs, while the control group learned vocabulary through traditional methods such as reading and memorization. Each group consisted of 25 students to ensure a balanced distribution in terms of gender, age, and language learning background. All students were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary.

The primary learning materials for the experimental group consisted of a selection of English songs that contained a wide range of vocabulary, including common words, idiomatic expressions, and slang. The songs were selected from various genres and time periods to provide diverse exposure to the English language and to ensure cultural relevance for the students. The selection of songs was based on their lyrical content and suitability for the students' proficiency levels. The songs used in this study included "Prom Queen" by Beach Bunny, which reflected contemporary language use, slang, and social issues related to self-esteem; "Let It Be" by The Beatles, which introduced common idiomatic expressions and vocabulary related to emotions; and "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran, which exposed students to informal language and cultural references.

For the control group, vocabulary instruction was conducted using traditional teaching methods. These methods included the use of word lists, flashcards, and reading comprehension exercises. Vocabulary items were explained briefly within sentence contexts to support understanding; however, no music or songs were used during the instruction. This approach allowed for a clear comparison between song-based vocabulary instruction and conventional vocabulary teaching methods.

The study was conducted through several systematic stages to examine the effectiveness of using English songs in teaching vocabulary. Prior to the intervention, both the experimental and control groups were given a vocabulary pre-test. This test measured students' initial vocabulary proficiency by assessing their ability to recognize target words in context and recall their meanings. The results of the pre-test served as baseline data to ensure that both groups had comparable vocabulary knowledge before the treatment began.

Following the pre-test, the intervention was implemented over a four-week period. The experimental group received vocabulary instruction through English songs. In each lesson, students were introduced to new vocabulary items embedded in song lyrics. They listened to the songs, read and analyzed the lyrics, and discussed the meanings of the target words based on their context. To reinforce learning, students engaged in various activities such as filling in missing words in the lyrics, matching vocabulary items with their definitions, and constructing sentences using the newly learned words.

In contrast, the control group received traditional vocabulary instruction during the same period. Vocabulary items were introduced through word lists and explained by the teacher without the use of songs or music. Students practiced the new words through conventional exercises, such as completing sentences and answering questions related to word meanings. Although vocabulary was still practiced in context, the instructional approach relied solely on traditional methods.

At the end of the four-week intervention, both groups completed a vocabulary post-test that was similar in format and difficulty to the pre-test. This post-test measured students' vocabulary knowledge after the intervention, focusing on the words taught during the treatment period. The results allowed for a comparison of vocabulary improvement between the experimental and control groups.

Finally, to examine long-term vocabulary retention, a delayed post-test was administered two weeks after the post-test. This follow-up test assessed students' ability to recall and apply the

vocabulary they had learned through either the song-based or traditional instruction. The results of the delayed post-test provided insight into the durability of vocabulary learning over time.

Data from the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The primary statistical test used was a paired-sample t-test to compare the vocabulary scores of the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention. This analysis allowed the researcher to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in vocabulary improvement between the two groups. In addition, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine potential differences in the effects of the intervention across participant subgroups, such as gender and age.

The analysis focused on several key areas. First, it examined the improvement in vocabulary scores within each group by comparing the pre-test and post-test results. Second, it evaluated the effectiveness of using songs in enhancing vocabulary retention by comparing the post-test and delayed post-test scores. Third, it investigated differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of vocabulary recall and usage.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were informed about the objectives of the study as well as their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants' privacy was protected, and all collected data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Furthermore, no personal identifying information was included in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

Results and Discussion

Vocabulary Improvement: Impact of English Songs

The results of this study indicate that the use of English songs significantly improved the vocabulary skills of students in the experimental group. The pre-test and post-test scores revealed a notable difference in vocabulary acquisition between the experimental group (who learned vocabulary through English songs) and the control group (who learned vocabulary through traditional methods). The experimental group exhibited a substantial improvement of 18%, compared to the control group's 8% improvement. This difference suggests that songs, through their engaging and repetitive nature, provide an effective method for enhancing vocabulary retention.

The paired-sample t-test confirmed the statistical significance of the improvement in the experimental group's vocabulary skills ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that English songs can be a powerful tool for vocabulary enhancement. Conversely, the control group, although showing some progress, did not experience significant improvements in their vocabulary acquisition, as reflected in their pre- and post-test results ($p > 0.05$). This comparison between the two groups confirms that English songs, with their distinct characteristics, offer a more impactful method for vocabulary learning compared to traditional approaches such as flashcards and word lists.

The findings are in line with previous research by Karim et al. (2022), which suggested that songs provide a context that is both enjoyable and educational, facilitating better language retention.

This study extends that research by specifically focusing on vocabulary learning, demonstrating that songs enhance not only immediate vocabulary recall but also long-term retention.

Repetition and Rhythm as Catalysts for Retention

One of the key factors that contributed to the success of English songs in enhancing vocabulary acquisition was **repetition**. Repetition is a well-known principle in language learning that plays a critical role in the retention of new vocabulary (Zaharani, 2023). The repetitive nature of songs—where vocabulary is repeatedly presented in the chorus, verses, and bridge—allows learners to hear and internalize the words multiple times, reinforcing their meanings and usage. Songs like "*Prom Queen*" by Beach Bunny, for example, present vocabulary within a musical context that naturally promotes repetition. The melody, rhythm, and lyrics work in tandem to create a memorable learning experience. Students in the experimental group were able to recall vocabulary words more easily because the repetitive structure of the song made the vocabulary feel more familiar and embedded in long-term memory. As noted by Shakibaei et al. (2019), repetition within songs offers a multisensory learning experience that aids in vocabulary retention, as students are exposed to the vocabulary not only through hearing but also through the rhythm and melody, which enhance memory encoding.

Additionally, the **rhythmic structure** of the songs plays an essential role in vocabulary retention. According to Hariyono (2020) when information is presented in both verbal and non-verbal forms (e.g., auditory and emotional), it becomes easier to process and recall. The rhythm in English songs creates a predictable pattern that makes the learning process more enjoyable and efficient. For example, the rhythmic elements in "*Prom Queen*" allowed students to more easily remember words such as "queen," "worth," and "enough" by associating these terms with the rhythm of the song. This is consistent with findings from Pradini and Adnyayanti, (2022) who argued that songs with rhythm and repetition aid the encoding of vocabulary in long-term memory.

Emotional and Cultural Engagement in Vocabulary Learning

An often-overlooked aspect of vocabulary learning through songs is the emotional engagement and cultural relevance that they offer. Music has a unique ability to engage listeners emotionally, which plays a crucial role in how well information is retained (Wahyudin et al., 2021). The lyrics of *Prom Queen* resonate with themes of self-esteem, body image, and societal pressure, which are issues many students can relate to. By engaging emotionally with the song, students in the experimental group were not only learning vocabulary but also reflecting on personal and societal issues, making the vocabulary acquisition process more meaningful and memorable.

In the context of language learning, this emotional connection is essential for motivation. As noted by Ghalebi et al.,(2021), motivation is a key factor in language learning, and emotionally engaging activities can significantly enhance motivation. Songs like *Prom Queen* provide more than just a method for vocabulary learning—they offer a way for students to connect with the language on a personal level, which in turn strengthens their commitment to learning and retention. The lyrics of the song discuss societal pressures and the struggle for self-acceptance, allowing students to connect emotionally with the language and use new vocabulary to express their own feelings.

Additionally, the cultural context embedded in English songs provides students with exposure to authentic language use and idiomatic expressions. Unlike traditional textbooks, which

often present language in sterile, artificial contexts, songs allow students to encounter words and phrases as they are used in real-life conversations. The inclusion of slang, informal expressions, and contemporary references in songs like *Prom Queen* helps students not only improve their vocabulary but also gain insight into how words are used in different social and cultural contexts. This exposure to real-world language use is particularly beneficial in developing communicative competence, as it prepares students to use the vocabulary they learn in everyday situations.

Long-Term Retention and Application of Vocabulary

The delayed post-test, administered two weeks after the final lesson, revealed that the vocabulary learned through English songs had a lasting impact on students' language abilities. The experimental group showed an average improvement of 15% in vocabulary retention, demonstrating that the vocabulary learned through songs was not only acquired but also retained over time. This result is consistent with the findings of Akramy et al. (2022), who emphasized that vocabulary learned in an engaging and context-rich environment, such as through songs, is more likely to be retained in long-term memory.

The delayed post-test also revealed that students in the experimental group were able to use the newly learned vocabulary in different contexts, showing their ability to apply the words outside the classroom. This suggests that the vocabulary learned through songs was not only retained but also integrated into the students' active vocabulary, which is a critical aspect of language learning. In contrast, the control group showed a smaller improvement in the delayed post-test, with many students unable to recall the vocabulary as effectively after two weeks.

This indicates that the use of songs in vocabulary learning not only improves short-term acquisition but also enhances long-term retention and application of vocabulary. The emotional engagement and repetitive nature of songs likely contribute to this effect, as students form stronger associations between the vocabulary and personal or cultural experiences, which helps solidify the words in memory.

Pedagogical Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study have important implications for language teaching. Incorporating songs into vocabulary lessons provides an innovative and effective method for vocabulary acquisition that increases student engagement, retention, and long-term application. Teachers can use songs as a fun and interactive tool to introduce new vocabulary, allowing students to engage with language in a meaningful and enjoyable context. By selecting songs that are relevant to students' interests and cultural backgrounds, teachers can create a more engaging and personalized learning experience that motivates students to learn and retain new words.

Future research could further explore the specific mechanisms by which songs contribute to vocabulary retention, particularly by examining the cognitive processes involved in learning vocabulary through music. Additionally, studies could investigate how different types of songs (e.g., classical, pop, folk) affect vocabulary learning, as well as how factors such as age, learning style, and cultural background influence the effectiveness of songs in language acquisition.

Conclusion

This study has explored the effect of English songs on enhancing students' vocabulary skills, focusing on vocabulary acquisition, retention, and long-term application. The findings provide compelling evidence that incorporating songs into language instruction significantly improves vocabulary learning compared to traditional methods. The experimental group, who learned vocabulary through English songs, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their vocabulary skills, particularly in terms of recall, retention, and application of new words. This suggests that English songs, with their repetitive nature, rhythm, and emotional engagement, offer a more effective and engaging approach to vocabulary acquisition.

The key mechanisms behind the success of English songs in enhancing vocabulary learning are **repetition** and **rhythm**. The repetitive exposure to vocabulary within the context of the song lyrics, along with the rhythmic structure that helps encode the words into memory, significantly contributed to the experimental group's improved vocabulary retention. Additionally, the **emotional and cultural engagement** fostered by the songs allowed students to connect with the language on a deeper level, making the vocabulary not only easier to remember but also more meaningful. This emotional connection helped students internalize vocabulary and apply it in a range of contexts, both within the classroom and beyond.

Furthermore, the long-term retention data from the delayed post-test highlighted the lasting impact of learning vocabulary through songs. The experimental group not only retained the vocabulary but was also able to use the words in different contexts, demonstrating the transfer of learning from the classroom to real-world situations. This is consistent with the idea that vocabulary learned in a context-rich, engaging environment is more likely to be retained and used actively.

In contrast, the control group, which relied on traditional vocabulary instruction methods, showed limited improvement in both short-term and long-term retention. This highlights the superior effectiveness of English songs in fostering vocabulary learning, as traditional methods often lack the emotional, cultural, and repetitive elements that songs provide.

The implications of this study for language teaching are significant. Incorporating English songs into vocabulary instruction offers an innovative and enjoyable way to engage students, improve vocabulary retention, and help them apply new words in practical situations. Teachers can select songs that align with students' interests and cultural contexts, making vocabulary lessons more relevant and motivating. By using songs as a tool for vocabulary learning, educators can foster a deeper connection to the language, enhancing both the learning experience and the retention of new vocabulary.

While the results of this study are promising, further research is needed to explore the specific cognitive mechanisms behind vocabulary learning through songs. Additionally, future studies could investigate how different genres of music or various types of songs influence vocabulary acquisition, as well as how factors such as age, learning style, and cultural background affect the efficacy of music in language learning.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that English songs can be a powerful tool in enhancing vocabulary skills, offering a more engaging and effective alternative to traditional methods of vocabulary instruction. By integrating music into language teaching, educators can create a more dynamic and enjoyable learning environment that helps students acquire and retain vocabulary in a meaningful way.

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