

USING ENGLISH SONGS AS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE EFL 6TH GRADERS' LISTENING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study, entitled " Using English songs as extracurricular activities to improve EFL 6th graders' listening skill " (A Quasi Experiment of Six Graders of Tan Tuc Junior High School in Binh Chanh, Ho Chi Minh City), is to find out the use of English songs as extracurricular activities to improve student listening skills and also to explore the responses of students to the use of English songs as a medium to improve student listening skills. A quantitative method was used in this study. Pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire were used to obtain data.

The pre-test and post-test data were computed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows while the questionnaire data were analyzed based on the frequency of student responses and then calculated and interpreted as a percentage. The instrument was tested and analyzed using the mean score formula. The result shows a significant difference between the pre-treatment score and the post-treatment score. It can be concluded that the use of English songs as extracurricular activities enhanced the listening skills of the sixth graders. The results of the questionnaires demonstrate that students appreciate the learning process of listening to English songs. It is specifically stated by their enthusiasm for the successful completion of the listening test and their answers to the questionnaires. Therefore, the students responded positively to the use of English songs as extracurricular activities in teaching listening skills.

Keywords: Listening Skill, Teaching Listening Skill, Teaching using English Songs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Songs can be used as a tool for teaching languages. Lavery (2001:85) suggests that songs can be a useful teaching tool. Then he adds that songs can be a great motivator for a work-shy class. Songs and jingles are a powerful means of reaching out to specific pupils.

Murphey (1992) points out that songs could be used to help students improve their language skills, including speaking and listening skills. Moreover, Shipley (1998) states that "Music helps children develop cognitive skills, as well as enhances language skills, by singing song; children learn language appreciation, vocabulary, and rhyme." Thus, using songs to teach English is quite beneficial in all aspects of language, including listening.

Using songs in the classroom can also create a more enjoyable atmosphere. According to Roberts (2001:400), most young people use songs as a motivation to control their mood and enhance emotional states such as loneliness or distraction from their troubles. So basically, humans (in this case, young students) likes to listen to music because it can motivate them and put them in a good mood. Similarly, Griffee (1995:5) states that songs have a place in the classroom to help create that friendly and cooperative atmosphere that is so important for language learning.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are activities that fall beyond the regular curriculum of school or university education undertaken by students. There are ECAs at all levels of education, from primary school to university. These activities are usually optional, i.e. they are not part of a standard school program, as opposed to compulsory, non-paying, social activities and also include those of the same age. "Extracurricular activity" involves student clubs, societies, and organizations that carry out these activities. It does not include sports competitions, workouts, or athletic teams or associations (Marsh and Kleitman, 2002). ECAs may also be believed by students as a way to improve social engagement, teamwork, healthy leisure, self-discipline, and self-confidence.

Participation in ECA may even be translated into academic points. While several studies have been conducted to determine the effect of ECAs on all-round student growth (Broh, 2002; Darling et al, 2005; Marsh and Kleitman, 2002; etc.), no systematic attempt has yet been made to look at

the role of ECAs in the various dimensions of student achievement in a detailed manner.

2.2. Extracurricular activities in the classroom

The identified benefits of out-of-school language learning programs include: improving student-teacher relationships as well as student-student relationships, improving school morale, improving school-community relationships, the need for disciplinary control, and the school holdings. ECAs have been shown to encourage successful cooperation between students, school employees, teachers, and principals (Anderson and Vandyke, 1963). Other demonstrated benefits of ECA include improving social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline, and trust (Astin, 1993), as well as improving academic performance overall (Marsh and Kleitman, 2002; Darling, Caldwell and Smith, 2005). Therefore, it is not surprising that language-oriented ECAs were successfully organized in most schools and universities around the world and proved to be an efficient method of language instruction. The advantages of ECAs tend to be especially apparent in the following areas of language learning: encouragement for learners, content development, cultural understanding, and language exposure.

2.2.1. ECA and Learner's Motivation

Motivation is a beneficial learning state, and interest from students is a way to preserve motivation (Anderson and Vandyke, 1963). Maintaining high motivation in language learning is one of the most important factors in positive language acquisition (Dornyei, 2001). According to some educators, one aim of using ECA in language teaching is to establish social and intellectual learning motives. Several language learner motivation models have been postulated in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psychology. Such models can inform ECAs' growth. For example, according to Gardner (2001), language learning motivation consists of three elements: first, language learning efforts; second, motivated individuals are eager to accomplish a goal; and finally, they enjoy learning the language. Through this viewpoint, various language-related experiences give learners additional opportunities to improve all three components of motivation: mastering the language, achieving their learning objectives, and enjoying the language learning experience.

Extracurricular activities can also lead to integrative motivation, as positive attitudes towards the target language country and people have a positive effect on language learning. ECAs may also play a role in creating instrumental motivation, i.e. to accomplish something meaningful and useful for future employment or personal lives. Developing social skills along with improving language skills in the ECAs cycle will help participants improve their lives or improve their chances of success in life. (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Hudson, 2000)

Book clubs, movie nights and other ECAs provide students with an ability to choose media that suits their specific preferences, not those of curriculum designers. It was proposed as early as the fifties that one of the ways to inspire younger learners was to employ not only classical literature but common youth modern bestsellers. The same applies to watching films, reading authentic magazine articles, and listening to music: resources of higher importance to learners are more inspiring to them, and ECAs offer an opportunity to represent learners' interests, as learners are largely responsible for organizing ECAs.

2.2.2. ECA and Language Exposure

Limitations on the number of interaction hours in language classes allow students very little opportunity to build and practice both language, socio-cultural, and communication skills. ECAs offer a required complement to contact class hours, but not only an extension of contact hours. This offers learners another form of learning. According to Krashen (1981), language acquisition progress depends on two forms of language exposure-outside the classroom's formal setting and sheltered curricular exposure within the classroom. ECAs provide appropriate language exposure outside the classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Scope of the study

This study aims to see whether the use of English songs can improve the listening skills of the students and the responses towards using English songs as extracurricular activities to improve their listening skills. In this study, eighty 6th graders of two classes (40 students each class) of the Tan Tuc Junior High School were participants who achieved English level 2 according to the 6-level framework of the Ministry of Education and Training.

The aim is to teach students listening skills via English songs as extracurricular activities.

3.2. Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a. Does the use of English songs as extracurricular activities improve learners' listening skills? And if it does, to what extent?
- b. What are students' attitudes towards the use of English songs as extracurricular activities in learning English?

3.3. Data collection methods

During the 10 weeks of teaching listening in an extra class at the English club (once a week, every Saturday), the students in the experimental class were learning with materials using English popular songs chosen by teachers while the students in the control class were practicing the listening tasks designed to match the tasks in the textbook. The pre-test was given to students at the first meeting, and the post-test, and questionnaire were given to participants at the last meeting.

This study will use some instruments for collecting data. Those are:

- a. The listening test is the primary instrument to collect the data. There are two types of tests: pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was given in the experimental class and control class to know how well the student's ability to listen before treatment. After the treatment, the post-test was given to know their ability to listen.
- b. The questionnaire consisting of nine questions is used to gather information from students in the experimental group about their attitudes towards the use of English songs as extracurricular activities in teaching students' listening skills and to answer the second part of the first research question "To what extent the use of English songs as extracurricular activities facilitate learners' listening learning?".

3.4. Data analysis methods

The data were analyzed through quantitative approaches. To meet the aims of the study, several steps are established to analyze the collected data:

- a. Delivering pilot-test to students for checking the validity, level of difficulties, and reliability of the test before conducting a pre-test.
- b. Providing the instruments, they are pre-test and post-test.
- c. Testing hypothesis and interpreting the result using the IPSS program for window build 1.0.0.1327.
- d. Conducting a questionnaire to know the students' responses.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Independent Samples Test

Table 1. Independent Samples Test of post-test

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	T	Df
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.056	.813	-5.824	78
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.824	77.135
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Lower
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.000	-1.87500	.32193	-2.51591
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	-1.87500	.32193	-2.51602

From the table, it can be seen that the significance of the Posttest between the Experimental Class and the Controlled Class was higher than the significance value ($0.813 > 0.05$). This means the H_0 hypotheses were accepted, the sample of Experimental Class and Controlled Class were homogenous. The significance of Sig. T-Test is was lower than significance value ($0.000 < 0.05$). Based on the critical value of T distribution at 0.05 level, T_{table} for $df = 78$ is 1.990. It means that T_0 is higher T_{table} ($5.824 > 1.990$),

implying 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.

4.2. Questionnaire

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix^a

Rotated Component Matrix^a			
	Component		
	1	2	3
Using English songs makes me more active and participate in listening activities.	.877		
Using English songs makes me remember the material that I learn.	.805		
I feel that learning listening via English songs is easier than learning from the textbook.	.520		
I am satisfied with using English songs as extra-curricular activities in learning English listening skills.		.790	
Listening to English songs help me be familiar with some accents in English.		.761	
I enjoy using English songs as extra-curricular activities in learning English listening skills.		.507	
I feel that my English “listening” ability has improved through the use of English songs.			.746
I want to spend more time learning listening skills with English songs.			.712
The English songs are great media in supporting listening activities.			.627

Factor analysis is used to identify latent constructs or factors. It is commonly used to reduce variables into a smaller set to save time and facilitate easier interpretations. In this study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) has been conducted in 9 items (observable variables) to be reduced to three latent variables that share a common variance and are unobservable. The example is suitable for Exploratory Factor Analysis as the KMO is $0.551 > 0.5$. The result of Exploratory Factor Analysis with Principal Components analysis is used to extract maximum variance from the data set with each component thus reducing a large number of variables into a smaller number of components and Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization resulted in three factors with extracted variance is $57.966\% > 50\%$.

The result of the final EFA was presented in table 4. The first factor includes 3 items named behavioral factor. The second factor includes 3 items named emotional factor. The last factor includes 3 items named cognitive factor.

Table 3. Questionnaire descriptive analysis

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. deviation
1	Frequency	0	0	5	25	10	4.1250	0.60712
	(%)	0	0	12.5	62.5	25		
2	Frequency	0	0	5	23	12	4.1750	0.63599
	(%)	0	0	12.5	57.5	30		
3	Frequency	0	0	1	25	14	4.3250	0.52563
	(%)	0	0	2.5	62.5	35		
4	Frequency	0	0	1	28	11	4.2500	0.49355
	(%)	0	0	2.5	70	27.5		
5	Frequency	0	0	4	23	13	4.2250	0.61966
	(%)	0	0	10	57.5	35.5		
6	Frequency	0	1	8	20	11	4.0250	0.76753
	(%)	0	2.5	20	50	27.5		
7	Frequency	0	0	2	29	9	4.1750	0.50064
	(%)	0	0	5	72.5	22.5		
8	Frequency	0	0	3	18	19	4.4000	0.63246
	(%)	0	0	7.5	45	47.5		
9	Frequency	0	0	5	22	13	4.2000	0.64847
	(%)	0	0	12.5	55	32.5		
10	Frequency	0	0	5	25	10	4.1250	0.60712
	(%)	0	0	12.5	62.5	25		
Attitude							4.2025	0.603817
Cognitive							4.2750	0.58733
Behavioral							4.1500	0.67855
Emotional							4.2083	0.54446

Statistical results (see Table 4) show that the mean value of attitudes toward using English songs as extracurricular activities to improve EFL 6th graders' listening skills of 40 respondents in the survey was 4.20 (standard deviation of 0.60). In addition, the mean of the three components of attitudes including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral was positive, with the cognitive component achieving the highest value of 4.28 (the standard deviation is 0.59, followed by the emotional component of 4.21 (standard deviation of 0.54) and the behavioral component of 4.15 (standard deviation of 0.68). These data show that students have a positive attitude towards using English songs as extracurricular activities in teaching listening skills.

5. DISCUSSION

The obtained value of T distribution ($T_0 = 5.824$) is higher than the value of $T_{critical}$ ($T_{table} = 1.990$). It can be concluded that the result of the pretest and posttest scores of experimental are different and there was an improvement in the students' listening ability.

To answer the second part of the first question of the research "To what extent the use of English songs as extracurricular activities facilitate learners' listening learning?" and the learners' attitudes towards the use of English songs as extracurricular activities in teaching listening comprehension, the data that are taken from the questionnaire were analyzed. From 40 students, around 55% of the students in the sample agree and 32.5% of the students in the sample strongly agree with the statement that English songs make them more active and participate in listening activities. Ninety-seven point five percent of the students in the sample agree and strongly agree with the use of English songs helps them be familiar with some accents in English.

At the same time, the figures also show that most students in the sample agreed learning listening via English songs is easier than learning from the textbook and 93% of students thought that using English songs makes them remember the listening material that they learn. Moreover, 62.5% agreed, 25% strongly agree that using English songs makes the situation in the class more interesting. Besides, the mean value of attitudes toward using English songs as extracurricular activities to improve EFL 6th graders' listening skills of 40 respondents in the survey (4.20), and the standard deviation (0.60) had proven the statement that students have a positive attitude towards using English songs as extracurricular activities in teaching listening skills.

6. CONCLUSION

The result of the study showed that the use of English songs is effective to improve students' listening skills. Moreover, the learning situation and interaction in class could also be effective and be attractive while utilizing this technique that leads to an increase in students' enthusiasm for learning. The use of English songs in teaching listening skill help students enhances their motivation in learning listening as well to improve their listening skill. Moreover, data from the questionnaire shows the use of English songs creates the teaching-learning process more interactive and active to motivate students. Besides that, it also makes a new atmosphere for students in the classroom, they felt interested and enthusiastic to follow the listening teaching and learning process.

We can conclude that the use of English songs as extracurricular activities can improve students' listening ability and motivate the students to attend lessons and pay attention in class. By using songs in teaching-learning teachers can:

- Make the situation in the class more interesting.
- Make students more active and participate in teaching-learning.
- Make the students remember the material that they learn.
- Motivate the students to increase their listening ability.

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