

**The Use of English Songs as an Incentive Vocabulary Learning Parameter:
The Case of Teachers and Second Year English Language Students
at Naama University Centre**

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Abstract

The ultimate aim of this study is to examine the effect of integrating English songs in EFL courses and how can songs contribute in enriching foreign learners' linguistic repertoire. The study also seeks at uncovering the main strategies used while learning vocabulary through songs in the classroom. The participants include sixty second year License students in addition to eight oral expression teachers from the English department at Naama University Centre. Through the use of a mixed-methods approach to data collection, namely questionnaires and interviews, the finding revealed that English songs' integration could serve as a significant pedagogical technique that could positively expand students' vocabulary repertoire. It has been also hypothesized that the main strategies are either writing down song-related vocabulary, or catching up unfamiliar words and understanding their meanings.

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1. Introduction

Almost everyone in the globe nowadays is engaged in learning a second language, whether it is for fun, for employment purposes, or through educational institutions. To become proficient in a language similar to one's original tongue, one must master a variety of linguistic components in the very complicated process of second language acquisition. The development and use of vocabulary is a crucial component of language learning; however, it can be difficult for speakers of second or foreign languages to do it. Many people have been pressured to learn English as it has become a language that is universally spoken in recent years all over the world and in many domains. To help in the teaching and learning of English vocabulary, researchers and educators have been actively searching for

creative and captivating methods. As a result, a significant amount of vocabulary acquisition requires students to work independently outside of the classroom. In the present digital era, there are many platforms and tools to help students learning new words.

Accordingly, English songs are now very important in the lives of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Some people utilize music to dance, establish a sense of community, or foster social interaction. They frequently listen to songs in order to improve their attitude, decompress, and pick up new vocabulary. Listening to music in general and to English songs in particular is nowadays one of the most interesting and incentive tools in acquiring new vocabulary. Effectively, many educators even integrate these songs in English courses as a vocabulary teaching device. Hence, the ultimate purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of songs' incorporation in EFL classes and its impact on students' vocabulary learning. It also aims at shedding light on the strategies suggested by teachers and employed by their students in order to acquire vocabulary through songs.

In order to accomplish the goals, the researcher aims to respond to the following questions:

Q1: What is the effect of integrating English songs in EFL courses?

Q2: What are the strategies used by students while learning vocabulary through songs?

The above-mentioned questions led to the formulation of the next hypotheses:

H1- English songs' integration could serve as a pedagogical technique that could positively expand students' vocabulary repertoire.

H2- English language students may use different strategies while learning vocabulary through songs which are either writing down song-related vocabulary, or catching up unfamiliar words and understanding their meanings.

In order to reach the previously set objectives, a mixed-method approach is used. The researcher designs two research instruments which are: a questionnaire for Second year LMD students and an interview with oral expression teachers. The sample population consists of sixty students and eight teachers from the department of English at -Salhi Ahmed- Naama University Centre. The results will be analyzed and interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important linguistic aspect and a crucial component of language; that is often referred to as 'the building block' of language. The term is defined differently by various scholars; depending on their individual perspectives of the term. Linse (2005, p. 121) points out that "vocabulary is the collection of words that an individual knows". In addition to that, Alqahtani (2015, p. 25) advocates that vocabulary can be identified as "the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speaker's meaning". The definitions make it clear that having a solid vocabulary is essential for clear understanding and efficient communication.

Vocabulary, also known as lexicon, may consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, or conjunctions. Wilkins (1972, p. 111-112) says that “while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. Similarly, Schmitt (2010, p.30) suggests that “while grammar is a closed system in that there is a limited set of rules, vocabulary is open-ended, with even older native speakers learning new words”. Both authors; thus, stress on the notion that while grammar is essential in language learning, it is almost impossible to learn a language without words. Consequently, learning vocabulary is a crucial part of learning a language and experts today require a methodical approach to vocabulary enhancement because of the sharp rise in attention to vocabulary in recent years.

In the same line of thought, Penny (1991, p. 60) put forwards that:

Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than a single word: for example, post office and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. There are also multi-word idioms such as call it a day, where the meaning of the phrase cannot be deduced from an analysis of the component words. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary ‘items’ rather than ‘words’.

The quote demonstrates that vocabulary does not consist of only individual words but also expressions and phrases existing in a language. Vocabulary is; thus, a core component of language that may include either a set of single words, compound words, phrases, or idioms learned by second language learners in order to enhance their language skills.

2.2 Songs

A song can be defined as a brief musical composition of words or lyrics. It is created using human vocal singing, either with or without the use of musical instruments. Griffie (1992, p. 3) states that the concept “song” refers to “pieces of music that have words, especially popular songs such as those one hears on the radio”. In this quote, Griffie emphasizes the connection between music and lyrics; highlighting the songs' broad appeal and effect.

Listening to music or songs is considered as a great source to acquire new words when learning a foreign language. Through listening to English songs, students can become fully immersed in real-world language use, meet new words and expressions in their appropriate contexts, and learn about the definitions and applications of various words. There are, in fact, two categories of listening to music either *intensive* or *extensive*.

Intensive listening refers to listening to music inside the classroom under the teacher's supervision and direction on the one hand. It necessitates paying more attention to the many grammatical structures as well as the meaning of each word and sentence. Extensive listening, on the other hand,

takes place outside the classroom environment for enjoyment and pleasure. Depending on their preferences, students are allowed to listen to a variety of audio resources. In this line of thought, Harmer (2007, p. 134) highlights that:

Intensive listening is different from extensive listening in that students listen specifically in order to work on listening skills, and in order to study the way in which English is spoken. It usually takes place in classrooms or language laboratories, and typically occurs when teachers are present to guide students through any listening difficulties, and point them to areas of interest.

Listening to English songs; then, is a very effective tool for EFL students in order to increase the amount of their vocabulary. Therefore, it is better for EFL learners to use both intensive and extensive listening which will enhance their lexis, pronunciation, as well as their listening skills. Listening to music is, indeed, a very beneficial parameter in language learning and teaching.

2.3 Songs as a Language Learning Device

Several studies discuss the issue of the positive impact of music and songs on foreign language learning. Malekian (2016) claims that Georgi Lozanov, a psychotherapist from Bulgaria, was one of the pioneers in the 1970s of using music in language learning. He created Suggestopedia, an all-encompassing method that enhances foreign language learning with background baroque music. This method focused on using a variety of components, including music, to create a calm and encouraging learning atmosphere.

English songs are, in fact, beneficial in any foreign language learning classroom through which students would be able to acquire new vocabulary in a relaxed context. In this sense, Haghverdi (2015) carried out an experimental study in Dehdasht, Iran, to find out how the use of songs and movies affected the English language learning of sixty high school students (aged from fifteen to seventeen). The findings, as a result, showed that the employment of music and movies had an incentive positive effect on the students' language proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, listening, and reading as well.

Furthermore, Zamin *et al.* (2020) looked into the potential benefits of using English songs in Malaysian tertiary language classrooms for students to increase their vocabulary of English verbs. Through a quasi-experimental study, the researcher discovered; then, that after listening to songs that contained verbs, the students' knowledge of verbs in vocabulary increased. The importance of using songs and music in foreign language instruction was stressed in each of the aforementioned research. Experimental research has yielded objective and quantitative evidence that shows the significance of songs for students who want to improve vocabulary and other language skills in the classroom or when studying independently. It can be evidently noticed that singing is an enjoyable technique to acquire new words. Learning a foreign or second language through songs is a fun and efficient method that enables students to fully engage with the music and harness its power to improve their language proficiency. With its unique blend of melody, rhythm, and words, songs offer language learners an enjoyable environment.

3. Research Design and Data Analysis and Interpretation

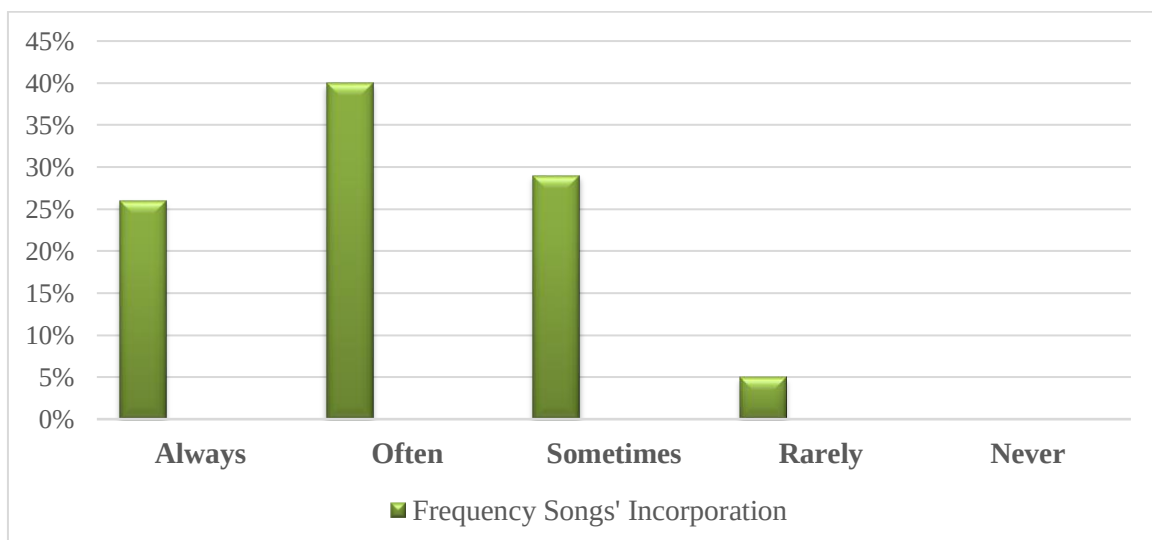
3.1 Research Methodology

For the purpose of collecting authentic data about the incorporation of English songs in EFL classes and examining its effect among students in real-life context, the researcher relies on a mixed methods approach; combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques. Two research tools are used which are: a questionnaire to 60 second year License students and a structured interview which are addressed to 8 oral expression teachers from the English department at -Salhi Ahmed- Naama University Centre. These research instruments are employed for the sake of exploring the impact of song' incorporation in English sessions as well as the strategies suggested by the teachers and used by their students while learning vocabulary through songs. They consist of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The results are analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.2 Students' Questionnaire Analysis

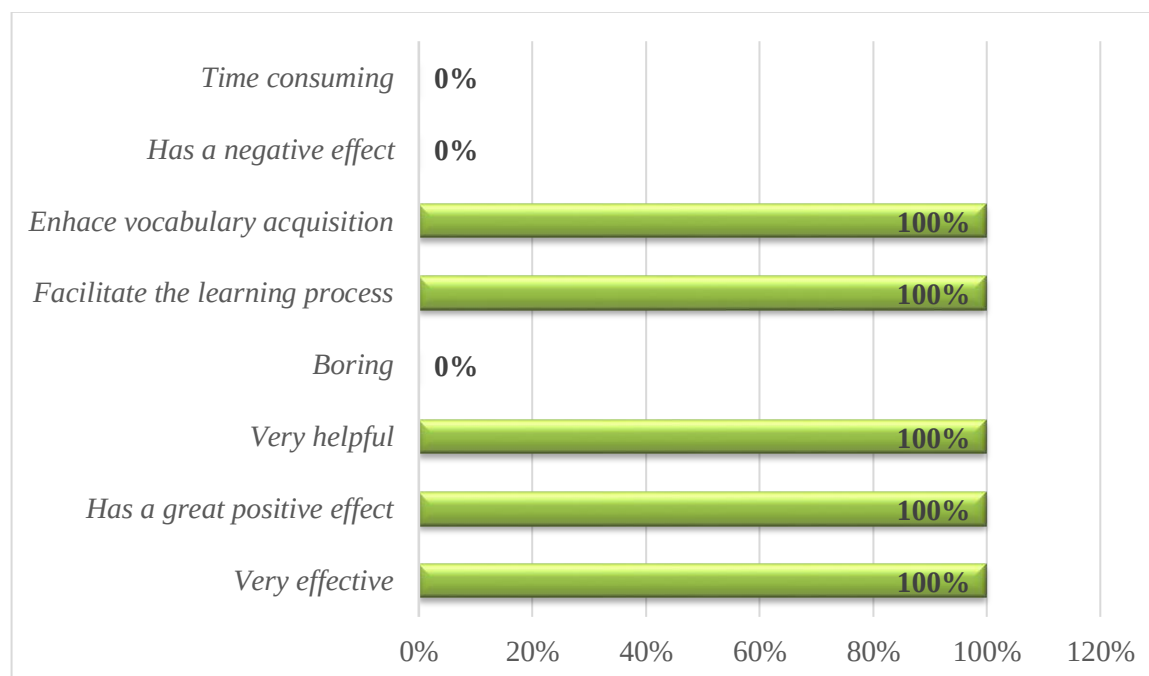
Second year English language students were asked about the frequency of incorporating English songs in their oral sessions. The findings showed that the high percentages range from 'always', 'often', to 'sometimes'. 40% of the participants asserted that they 'often' employed songs in oral sessions, 26% for 'always' while 29% for 'sometimes'. Only 5% of the respondents claimed that they used songs 'rarely' whereas no one said 'never'. The results can be clearly noticed in the figure below:

Fig. 1. Frequency English Songs' Incorporation in Oral Sessions



When the participants given a list of choices about the effectiveness of songs' inclusion on their vocabulary learning and asked to select the ones that suited their real situations, the following answers have been found:

Fig. 2. Impact of English Songs' Integration



All the respondents (100%) asserted that songs' integration in oral expression sessions '*has a great positive effect*', '*is very effective*', '*enhances vocabulary acquisition*', '*is very helpful*', and '*facilitates the learning process*' as well. Whereas, no respondent (0%) selected the following choices: '*has a negative effect*', '*boring*', or '*time consuming*'.

When the students were requested if there are certain types or genres of English songs which are more helpful, most students responded that songs with slow, calming beats are more useful than those with loud, quick ones. Additionally, they asserted that they liked songs with a catchy chorus and well-pronounced lyrics; adding that songs with simple, relevant lyrics, and a contextualized melody are advantageous. When asked to cite some preferred genres of music, the followings have been stated: '*pop, country, jazz, R&B, ballads, and classics.*'

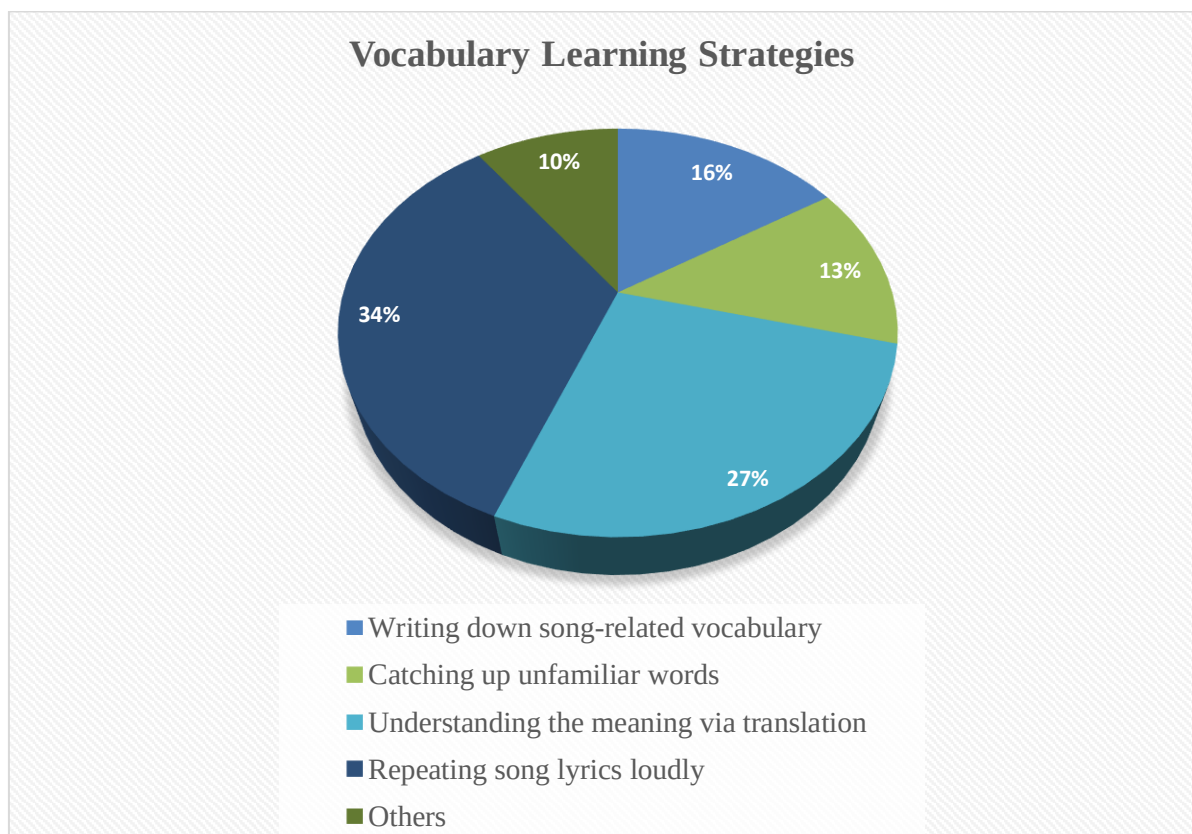
3.3 Teachers' Interview Analysis

When the oral expression teachers were asked if they have ever taught vocabulary through English songs in their classes and why, six teachers claimed that they employed this strategy because they believed it will keep students motivated and entertained more and more. They contend that it is a means of enlivening the lessons and breaking up the monotony. Two teachers asserted that they

mixed the strategies; they sometimes relied on oral conversations and debates and sometimes on music.

When the teachers were asked about the strategies suggested by them and used in the classroom by their students in order to enhance vocabulary acquisition via songs, 34% of them stated that they depended on the strategy of repeating song lyrics loudly, 27% saw that students learn more via translating the meanings to the native language, 16% said that the students when writing down song-related vocabulary is beneficial as well in the teaching learning processes, 13% declared that catching up unfamiliar words is another good strategy for vocabulary learning, while 10% of the participants suggested other strategies.

Fig.3. The Strategies Implemented to Enhance Students' Vocabulary Learning



When the teachers were asked to suggest other beneficial strategies for better vocabulary learning via songs' listening, they cited the followings: creating flashcards with song-related vocabulary, discussing the meaning of word with their partners or looking for its synonyms in the dictionary through which can learn both lexis and pronunciation, or employing online resources for song-based lexicon learning.

When the teachers were asked to what extent these strategies are effective in achieving a successful lexical, phonological, and grammatical levels among EFL learners, the majority of the respondents highlighted that they are '*very effective*', some of them answered that they are '*somewhat effective*', very few of them claimed '*neutral*' and no one for '*ineffective*'. The percentages are summarized in the next table:

Table 1. The Degree of Learning Strategies' Effectiveness on Vocabulary Acquisition

Strategies' effectiveness	Percentages
Very effective	57%
Somewhat effective	39%
Neutral	4%
Ineffective	0%

3.3 Interpretation of the findings

The ultimate aim of this study is to examine the impact of English songs on the process of vocabulary learning in EFL classes. The study also aims to identify the strategies used by students while using this teaching learning method. The findings of the questionnaire, in fact, showed that the majority of the respondents asserted that songs are often used as a pedagogical tool in oral sessions. All the students; indeed, confirmed the fact that the incorporation of songs is very effective and helpful; having a great positive effect on enhancing vocabulary acquisition, expanding the amount of students' lexis repertoire and facilitating the learning process. The students preferred a list of songs' types that make vocabulary learning more engaging and enjoyable. These genres are: pop, country, jazz, R&B, ballads, and classics.

The results obtained from the teachers' interview revealed that the majority of respondents liked using English songs as a teaching method in their oral sessions. According to them, this strategy will keep students motivated and entertained more and more. In addition to such a strategy as a helpful one, the teachers also encouraged mixing different strategies in the classroom such as oral conversations and debates for better quick easy achievements.

Moreover, the teachers suggested some significant strategies to use in the classroom in order to develop the learners' vocabulary acquisition when listening to English songs. These strategies are as

follows: repeating song lyrics loudly, translating the meanings to the native language, writing down song-related vocabulary, catching up unfamiliar words, using dictionaries, discussing the song's meaning with others, in addition to using online sources for song-based vocabulary learning. The teachers encouraged employing frequently all these strategies since they are very beneficial. They also let the students to select among these strategies the ones that help and suit them as well as the genres of music in order to create a relaxed enjoyable environment through which they can expand their vocabulary repertoire.

4. CONCLUSION

Mastery of vocabulary is crucial when learning a new language. Most EFL students find it difficult to expand their language knowledge or frequently forget what they have learned. To address this difficulty and make the vocabulary acquisition process more enjoyable, educators and students turn to English songs as engaging and stimulating resources for learning new vocabulary, expressions, and idioms. The results; indeed, confirmed that song-based language learning is an enjoyable and effective approach that provides a fun atmosphere for language learners with music distinctive melody, rhythm, and lyrics. The students preferred songs with a memorable chorus and clear lyrics such as: “*Pop, R&B, jazz, country, pop, ballads, and classics*”. Listening to English-language music is; then, a highly incentive teaching-learning parameter and a useful method for expanding learners' vocabulary. However, it is better to employ both extensive and intensive listening since this will improve listening comprehension, lexis, and pronunciation. It has been also concluded that the teachers suggested significant strategies to be implemented in the classroom in order to develop the learners' vocabulary acquisition when listening to English songs which are: repeating song lyrics loudly, catching up unfamiliar words, using dictionaries, translating the meanings to the native language, writing down song-related vocabulary, discussing the song's meaning with others, in addition to using online sources for song-based vocabulary learning. Hence, vocabulary is a crucial part of learning a language and experts today motivate a mixed methodical approach to vocabulary enhancement; requiring songs' integration, oral conversations and debates as well because of the sharp rise and importance of the English language all over the world.

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