

Using English Lyrics as a Tool for Language Learning: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to explore the efficacy of using English songs in ESL courses as a method of acquiring the English language. Urdu is both the students' mother tongue and the medium of instruction at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), so the researcher used this study to experiment and explore the use of selected English songs to develop language skills among undergraduate students in their third semester at MANUU whose mother tongue is Urdu. With the help of pre-test and post-test questionnaires, a select group of students are put to the test regarding their level of English proficiency both before (without the use of English songs) and after (with the use of English songs) the study. The test is administered both without the use of English songs and with the use of English songs. After that, the students were asked questions to determine whether or not the English songs that were used as a language learning aid were successful in increasing students' abilities to communicate in English. The findings demonstrated that utilising English songs in an ESL setting is not only useful but also engaging for the purposes of teaching and acquiring English language skills.

Keywords: English Songs, Undergraduate Students, Urdu Medium, Language Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Wikipedia defines "English as a lingua franca" as the use of English among speakers of different first languages, where English serves as the chosen medium of communication and often the only option. This definition highlights the widespread use of English as a global means of inter-community communication. English is one of the most spoken languages worldwide, with extensive usage in everyday conversation, politics, official discourse, law, education, religion, business, and trade. Consequently, English has evolved from a foreign tongue to a global language. Proficient English speakers are in high demand in both the job market and social circles. Enhancing our creative English language skills enables us to learn about and appreciate the diverse cultures and traditions that constitute the United States. Educators and linguists globally are continually seeking innovative methods to improve the teaching and learning of English.

Songs As a Tool for Language Acquisition

The Online Google Dictionary: Oxford Languages defines songs as "a short poem or other sets of words set to music or intended to be sung" or "the musical phrases uttered by certain birds, whales, and insects, typically forming a recognisable and repeated sequence and used primarily for territorial defence or attracting mates." Due to the excessive use of technology such as computers and smartphones with readily available mobile applications such as social networking sites, songs have become an integral part of our existence. This experimental study will help us comprehend how English melodies can be utilised as a productive, advantageous, engaging, and novel language-learning aid. Nowadays, students devote a great deal of time to listening to music, and some of them have developed the habit of harmonising and listening to tunes. If they can pay a little bit of attention, devote some of their free time, and concentrate on learning English, they could easily transform this listening or singing propensity into a highly effective language-learning process. This strategy begins with listening to and comprehending song lyrics. Songs have the ability to be remembered longer than ordinary interactions. The majority of us still remember a large number of melodies from our school days, but are unable to recall the teachings and other information from our textbooks. This method does not encourage students to repeatedly listen to traditional lectures and classes, but rather allows them to listen to

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their favourite music and learn the language with passion and interest. By focusing on the lyrics, students can familiarise themselves with the vocabulary and syntactic principles as well as learn new words. Furthermore, they will enhance their pronunciation and memorise vocabulary.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to improve the English language proficiency of third-semester B.A. students at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) whose native language and medium of instruction is Urdu through the use of English songs as an efficient and engaging language learning tool.

METHODOLOGY

This experimental study was conducted in a classroom with MANUU third-semester undergraduates using a mixed methodology to determine the efficacy and utility of this technique. First, the instructor has chosen freely available English melodies from YouTube. The researcher uses Google forms for both pre-test and post-test questionnaires in order to determine the level of English comprehension, improvement, and interest of the students. Later, the researcher used selected English melodies to enhance the language skills of 30 classes of undergraduates. The researcher then asked students to determine the efficacy and utility of English melodies for enhancing English language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the development of LSRW skills among undergraduate students through English Songs. Songs are one of the most effective and valuable tools for language acquisition and development. Several studies have demonstrated that English melodies are the most efficient and effective method for learning the English language. According to studies, students who regularly listen to music can enhance their language skills, particularly their vocabulary, syntactic principles, pronunciation, word stress, intonation, and cadence. Katie Manson claims that music has been effective in teaching second-language grammar. Fagerland (2006) investigated the relationship between music and grammar among EFL students. This research sought to determine whether melodies could be used to improve students' grasp of specific grammar concepts. The study found that test group samples performed significantly better on post-tests involving reflexive pronouns and 'another and I' than their control group counterparts. The researcher also found that the repetition of the lyrics and the use of standard intonation, particularly in the passages containing reflexive verbs, assisted students in remembering the grammatical structures. According to Fisherman (2003), English melodies facilitate the growth of students' auditory comprehension.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The Use of Music in Teaching Grammar

Most students find that learning grammar the traditional manner is a tedious, unenjoyable, and distracting task. If we just use conventional methods of instruction, students might lose confidence and eventually lose interest in learning a new language altogether, even English. For the simple reason that learning and anticipating grammatical rules is not a particularly engaging topic, especially for pupils whose native tongue and medium of education is Urdu. Students will experience more anxiety as a result of the excessive emphasis placed on learning grammatical rules. But, with the use of novel approaches, it may become more dynamic, fruitful, and engaging. One fun approach to teaching and learning English is through the use of popular songs. It's true that music has a positive effect on our mood and state of mind. When we combine music with grammar, we provide teachers a powerful tool for engaging and motivating their pupils. In addition, listening to music may be a great way for kids to relax and unwind. The same lines are often repeated in music, which is a memory technique that works well. The first step is for the instructor to decide what aspect of grammar will be covered.

Once a selection has been decided, the next step is to locate applicable tunes. The study's chosen children were taught language skills using YouTube songs made available at no cost to the researcher. Songs like "As Tears Go By" and "You Were Meant for Me" are used to teach the Simple Present Tense. Surprisingly, most of the students have showed an eagerness to learn about and familiarity with the simple present tense and its practical

applications in everyday discourse. Self-direction, enthusiasm, and engagement were all in plain view. Songs like "Yesterday when I was young" and "You were destined for me" are frequently used in education to illustrate the usage of the simple past tense. Songs like "Would you still love me tomorrow" and "When I am 64" are presented as examples of simple past tense. For many pupils, the present perfect tense might be difficult to master; nevertheless, with the help of great songs like "Have you ever seen the rain?" and "I still haven't found what I'm seeking for," this obstacle can be easily conquered. Students were able to grasp the concept of the present perfect tense without any ambiguity because to these songs. Students listened to songs with great interest and enthusiasm until they were thoroughly familiar with them. Songs like "If I Fell in Love" and "If I Were a Boy" were utilised by the researcher to help participants grasp the second conditional tense. The song "I should have brought you flowers" is a great way to demonstrate the meaning of the verb "should have" to students.



Figure1: Grammar

According to the data above, 95% of students have found grammar to be both enjoyable and educational. While there is no shortage of amazing and fascinating songs with lyrics available on YouTube, caution should be used when choosing songs to use for grammatical instruction or study. Songs' tempos should be slowed down in the first stages of study so that they can be understood by students. Otherwise, the children will have a hard time singing along and comprehending what is being said. They can return the play speed to normal after they're comfortable with the pronunciation. In order for pupils to learn and remember the song's lyrics, they must see them shown on the screen and be encouraged to sing along with reading the words. The findings demonstrated that utilising songs to learn a language is both efficient and enjoyable.

Using Songs to Improve Listening Skills

The ability to listen attentively is a crucial one for any language learner. One requires patience, enthusiasm, passion, focus, and concentration to develop into a master listener. As you listen, you're actually using a number of different talents at once; it's not a passive activity. It's not just songs or speeches or even everyday conversation that has students unable to decipher native speakers' accents; it's everything. Before they become familiar with the genuine pronunciation, pupils have a hard time understanding the native accent. Learning to recognise and mimic the pronunciation of native speakers is the first step in developing better listening skills. So, the only method to learn the proper pronunciation of words is to listen to native English speakers frequently. Although the students may grasp the meaning of the words they are using, they may not know how to properly pronounce them. Nonetheless, most of us could find it tedious to sit through one of their speeches, lectures, or lessons. In order to learn a new language, many of us start by listening to TED lectures or speeches delivered by native speakers. Songs, whether they are sung to toddlers or adults, have an incredible ability to leave a lasting impression. The students who used this strategy to hone their listening abilities reported feeling encouraged by their progress and resolved to maintain their listening to the music. They are quite pleased with the progress they have made in just one week using this method. The first time they use this method, students may struggle to grasp the words without the lyrics. But, after they start utilising the lyrics or reading the lyrics along with listening to the music, they feel much more at ease. Music listening has been shown to have positive psychological effects as well.

There are several advantages to this strategy, including the fact that students may improve their listening abilities, test and validate their current listening abilities, learn new vocabulary and their usage, and memorise the lyrics. Students may utilise this strategy whenever they have access to a smartphone and headphones, including while travelling, working out, lounging in bed or sitting, driving, cooking, cleaning, walking, or riding a bicycle.

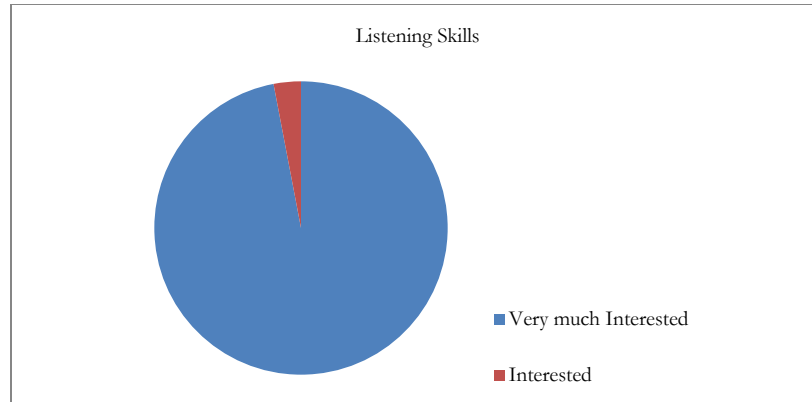


Figure 2: Listening Skills

The image above illustrates how children may enhance their listening abilities by listening to music. One of the main advantages of this strategy for improving listening skills is that it is not tedious, unpleasant, or forced; it is also affordable, quick, and flexible enough to fit in with other activities. As we listen to a song, a variety of things happen, including language acquisition, vocabulary development, sentence structure, pronunciation, intonation, accent, and the meaning of new words. These premium characteristics contribute to the success, popularity, and welcome of this approach. By incorporating this strategy, the instructor may provide students with a variety of tasks such as pronunciation, word accent, rhythm, and intonation.

Using Music to Improve Reading Skills

Reading is a necessary skill in learning any language, and reading is the sole way to learn any language. The fate of our education, however, rests in the hands of the books we choose to read. So, the first crucial step in the process of enhancing your reading skill is selecting the most engaging technique or content that can only lead to a successful and good outcome. We've established that singing helps with more than just listening comprehension; it's also a great way to learn grammar. Let's take a look at the ways in which musical compositions may be utilised to teach reading. According to Plato, musical training is essential (Hancock 1996, p 58). The brain has a wonderful response to music. Researchers have shown that listening to music can improve cognitive abilities. It has been suggested that music can be used to boost a beginning reading programme (Cohen, 1974). He also mentioned that using music to teach reading is a kinaesthetic method.

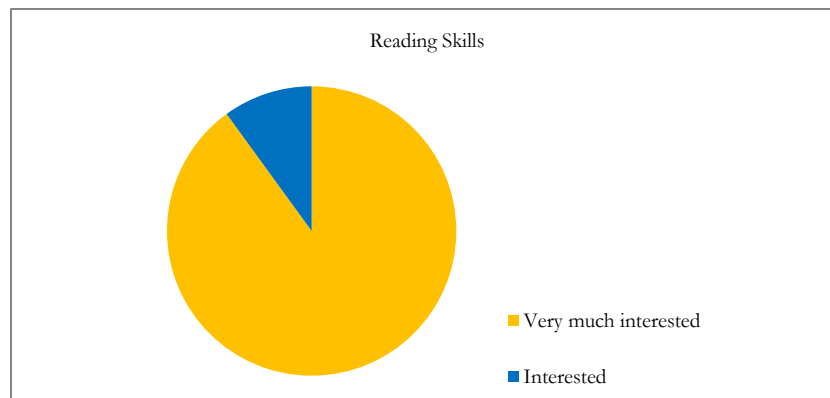


Figure 3: Reading Skills

The graph up above demonstrates how successful it was for pupils to learn to read through songs. The songs are used to teach the pupils how to read more effectively. Following the successful conclusion of the experiment, the teacher spoke with the students about the growth and advancement that may be attained by utilising this approach to studying English language skills. The pupils enthusiastically replied, stating that they were more engaged in learning with this method than with any other conventional method, and that they also felt much more improved and advanced without the tediousness and mental strain of learning.

Using Songs to Improve Writing and Speaking Abilities

We have already established that melodies play a significant role in the development of listening and reading abilities. In addition, we discussed how they would aid in enhancing students' learning abilities. Playing melodies in the language classroom aids students in imitating pronunciation, memorising vocabulary and sentence structures, and improving their English language skills. Let us now consider how tunes help students develop their speaking and writing abilities. To enhance students' communication skills, the teacher played selected songs twice or three times and then asked students to discuss their ideas, opinions, and the song's meaning. The majority of students were engaged and posed questions, clarified misconceptions, and expressed their opinions. Therefore, if one can improve their grammar, this will undoubtedly aid in the development of their writing abilities. When students are instructed to record the vocabulary, usages, and other sentence components, their writing skills will undoubtedly improve. In addition, the teacher can provide sentence-building exercises using the vocabulary in the lyrics. When it comes to speaking skills, it is recommended that students be encouraged to sing the song while listening to the music and reading the lyrics, or that the teacher ask them to read the lyrics aloud in order to improve their fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and accent.

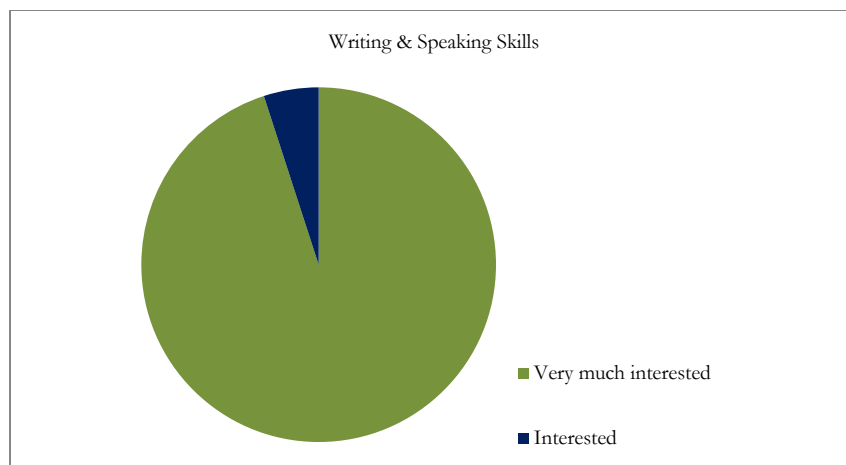


Figure 4: Writing & Speaking Skills

Figure 4 depicts the attitudes of students regarding the use of melodies to develop speaking and writing skills. This study demonstrates that melodies are extremely useful for enhancing language abilities. When they begin chanting the melody, the students will immediately attempt to imitate the pronunciation. This will help them improve their pronunciation and memorise the new terms; once they can recall the new words and comprehend their meanings, they will be able to recall them effortlessly when speaking English. We can observe the degree of fluency among students who regularly listen to English tunes. During oral presentations and other informal discussions, the students in this class demonstrated a remarkable increase in their fluency and pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's methodology, undergraduates in their third semester at MANUU were utilised to test out this strategy for teaching English through music. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that utilising songs to teach English to undergraduate students is an effective and practical strategy, particularly in the language classroom (figures 1-4). Most pupils have room to grow in their command of the English language and would benefit from doing so. As a result, we can state categorically that incorporating English songs into

the language classroom is a very effective and engaging strategy for educating students of all ages and proficiency levels in the English language.

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