

The Influence of Using English Songs in Developing Speaking and Listening Skills of Students in the 1st - 4th Grades at the Palestinian Schools

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ABSTRACT

Mastering any language needs a competency of the four main basic skills that affect the way people use and learn that language. These skills are listening, reading, writing and speaking. However, improving student's abilities to communicate successfully is not an easy task and needs many coordinated efforts.

One of the most important and influential factors which can be used to enhance student's positive attitudes towards the English language is the use of songs inside the English classes.

Accordingly, this study aims to shed light on the influence of songs in promoting speaking and listening skills in primary classes (1-4) at our schools in Palestine. The study stresses the role that songs can play in this respect along with the factors that affect their learning positively in Ramallah schools. It also presents the drawbacks and difficulties while using this technique among our students reaching main conclusions and helpful suggestions in addition to some suggested solutions and recommendations.

Keywords: influence, songs, speaking and listening skills.

Introduction:

The English language is the best-studied and most sought in the world. A rule-governed verbal behavior has attained global proportions. There are two rationales for adopting an early start (classes from 1-4) in English Foreign Language teaching. The first one relates to the fact that English has emerged as the lingua franca (Klimczak-Pawlak, 2014) as well as the major language for communication around the world (Rich, 2014). The second rationale is due to the belief that teaching English as a foreign language before the critical period of 12 or 13 years old will help students acquire the language more easily (Shin, 2006).

Songs are used as a teaching technique in (1-4) classrooms for many reasons. First, students love songs and enjoy learning and singing. Second, songs help students imitate and remember words. It is said that every child can sing from the earliest cultures and probably before humans learned to speak (Cifuentes, 2006). Songs promote speaking skills and stimulate students' imagination. Orlova (2003) indicates that using songs and chants in first classrooms serve several methodological purposes such as teaching listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary as well as practicing the rhythm, stress and the intonation patterns of the English language.

This research intends to make a deep investigation into the effects of different songs among Palestinian students at early classes (1-4), who have to learn under challenging circumstances. It is obvious that the English language is not a very easy medium of communication especially inside our crowded classes because the learners themselves have to grapple with a lot of various factors; their mother tongue, teacher-induced errors, peer group pressure, and many other factors.

The Problem Statement of the Study:

Speaking and listening are two of the most problematic issues that face our little pupils at schools, which also affect teachers themselves, especially with their crowded English textbooks they have to finish during a limited short time. On the other hand, these two main skills (speaking and listening) are frequently classified as the most neglected aspects of language in classrooms.

On the other hand, cultural challenges may arise because while teachers may be aware of the importance of using songs in their pupil's classes, some of them may resist using songs due to their cultural and religious beliefs.

Therefore, teachers will face enormous challenges while searching for the best techniques to improve the pupils' understanding, which certainly requires dedicating a significant amount of time to prepare the suitable atmosphere, tools, and pieces of songs that pupils can interact with in addition to suitable environment.

Hypotheses

- 1 - Using songs enhances the Arab students' speaking skills.
- 2 - Using songs enhances the Arab students' listening skills.
- 3 - Using songs enhances the Arab students' pronunciation.
- 4 – There are problems, which face Arab learners while listening to English songs.

The Questions of the Study

The main questions that this study tries to answer are:

- 1- What are the best ways for presenting songs to pupils in the first-fourth classes effectively?
- 2-How can English teachers use songs to enhance Arab students speaking and listening skills to achieve and improve oral communication functions?
- 3-How can teachers encourage pupils to pronounce correctly because of singing and chanting?
- 4- What are the main problems that face Arab pupils while listening to English songs and music?

The Purposes of the Study

This study aims to identify the influence of songs in developing speaking and listening skills in classes from (1-4) grades to develop their speaking skills and also to encourage them to engage in pair and group chanting, singing, dialogues, and discussions.

The Main Objectives of the Study:

The current study aims

- 1 – To develop student's oral language especially listening and speaking.
- 2 – To keep students engaged and active and increase their involvement and participation.
- 3- To get rid of boredom and daily routine and free student's imaginations.
- 4- To develop students emotionally and pay more attention to their feeling as individuals with psychological needs.

The Significance of the Study:

No doubt, singing makes anything sound better, it also helps pupils remember better. It is an easy and fun way to get pupils to do some of the things that parents want their children to do. It also teaches them about their world. Children respond to singing a great deal. It can help a shy child express himself, an angry child calms down and an anxious child relax. Singing reaches them in more ways, makes different connections and teaches pupils new skills every time.

When children sing, they learn a different way to express themselves. It helps them validate their feelings too. Singing with children can help them turn away from anxiety, fear, and frustration. It can help them to memorize information easier and can help them pay attention to their teacher. Songs are an essential part that can revolve about students themselves as the center of the learning process.

Limitations of the Study

There are four major limitations to this study:

- 1- The place of the study: The study focuses only on limited numbers of English classes in Ramallah District (1-4grades).
- 2 – Limited numbers of teachers are involved in this study.

3-The time of the study: It is limited to the Ramallah school teachers in the academic year (2018-2019) who filled the study tool (the questionnaire).

4-The results of the study, accordingly, will apply only to the respondents and schools that are directly involved in the current investigation.

Literature Review

Introduction:

Songs have recently been commonly used in schools for several purposes as a technique of teaching: First of all, students enjoy songs and want to learn and to sing. Second, songs allow students to mimic words and recall them. Every child is said to be able to sing from earliest cultures and possibly before people learned to speak (Cifuentes, 2006).

This section discusses the history of the songs used to learn the ability to speak and listen to the classes of (1-4) to create a historic context for the subject. The research method can also be suggested to improve in recent years with an emphasis on oral skills and a need to continue change.

Songs Definition

In the first place, Hornby (1995) describes a song as a short poem that is set with music and intended to be sung. Ratnasari (2007) also describes a song as a piece of art for singing with instrumental accompaniment or without accompaniment. El-Nahhal (2011) regards children's songs as 'music, instruments, tunes and rhymes' and they are a particular rhym, repetition and form, not an ordinary message or a simple phrase' (p.18). While most earlier definitions of researchers connect songs with music, the concept of Ratanasari clearly shows that songs can be used with or without instrumental accompaniments. Therefore, the main emphasis of this research review is the use of songs isolated from musical instruments. Songs are known as words that are perfectly rhymes to provide a repeated sense of melody, as with songs.

Gardner's Theory:

Each man is unique and intelligent, at least in seven different ways, according to the theory of Gardner. Seven types of intelligence include verbal languages, visual and spatial information, interpersonal intelligence, musical rhythm, logic and intrapersonal information. In particular, the focus of this study is the musical intelligence that concerns the learners of composition, performance and music appreciation (Gardner, 1999). The effect of music in the language school was demonstrated by researchers. Fonseca and Arnold (2004) state that developing musical intelligence in EFL classes creates a relaxed and productive environment. Therefore, the use of songs is worthwhile when exploring musical intelligence. The rhythms, sounds and patterns are students with strong musical intellect. The best way to teach learners with musical intelligence is through activities such as singing, lyrics, and creating rhythmic patterns. Increasing young people to bat while singing and

saying a rhyme helps them to develop a sense of rhythm. in English based on this theory (Bas, 2008).

Previous Studies

Many previous studies show that songs are a valuable technique to teach oral skills. Sevik (2012) conducted a theoretical study to study the importance of the songs as listening activities in young EFL students' classes in his work *Developing Young Learners' Listening Skills through Songs*. He concludes that listening skills are a priority in language learning, not passive skills. Hearing activities give young students understandable input, of which they are eventually able to speak. Listening activities can accompany visual images and physical movements to attract young students. Songs, when carefully selected, provide young learners with a rich input that helps them learn the language. The repetitive nature of songs, joy songs impose the power of melody on the students and the content of texts strengthen language learning. He adds that the use of songs in the classes of young learners provides an opportunity for real language in meaningful situations.

Likewise, Millington (2011) studies on the theoretical use of songs to teach English to young learners. It discusses how songs can help students improve their listening and pronunciation skills. He gives practical examples of how songs can be used as language tasks. He explains that in order to maximize the advantages of songs, songs should be developed into language learning tasks. Singing itself will not teach learners to use the language, but developing a song from activity to task with preparation, core, and follow-up will help maximize the potential of songs as a teaching tool. Songs can also be adapted to match the curriculum or the point of language to be taught. By adapting a song, teachers can select and incorporate in the song a certain language feature such as syntax, vocabulary or simple conversation. Teachers will save time looking for new songs in this way.

In its study Arevalo (2010) examines the listening performance of students in six song-based workshops, using songs as a tool for work on listening and culture in EFL classes. He conducted action research with four types of instruments, surveys, student observations, and a semi-structured interview. He said that songs "are the best type of real material to develop listening understanding" Based on his findings (p.130).

When teachers select the appropriate songs and design meaningful listening function, Songs can develop listening understanding. His results also show that listening to music increases the motivation of students and their attention. Students are more interested in learning through songs. They are more likely to attend the class due to the simple conversational language provided by songs. He found also that students become acquainted with the pronunciation of native speakers through songs. Thus, without realizing it, they learn grammar automatically.

In the same way, Romero, Bernal, and Olivares (2012) carried out an action research to examine study in oral production when students take part in song activities in their study *Using Songs to Encourage Sixth Graduates to develop English speaking skills*. They observed their classes in English and carried out a survey for the collection of

data. Songs should be an important part of everyday teaching activities on the basis of their study. They found that using music motivated students and enabled them to speak in an environment that is not at risk. When songs are carefully selected and match the needs of students, students learn vocabulary and trust.

Other researchers such as Tse (2015), Sevik (2011) and Hejjawi (2007) explore the views of teachers in their teaching of English using songs. Tse's (2015), a study on "Perspectives for the use of songs in English Languages Teaching" by Malaysian Teachers, aims at investigating the perceptive use of songs by Malaysian ESL teachers in their English courses. The participants included 60 teachers of Malaysia and one survey tool. Based on his findings, most Malaysian teachers see songs as an important pedagogical tool to be used in ESL curricula. The study results showed that most teachers regard songs as essential for promoting listening skills.

However, EFL Saudi's cultural background is different from that of Tse's Malaysian ESL teaching staff for this study. Sevik's (2011) Teachers' views on the use of songs in teaching English to young teachers, research, a study descriptive of teachers' views on the use of songs. 52 teachers from Turkish EFL participated and a questionnaire was used. The study findings show that most primary teachers in Turkish EFL regard songs as an important part of English language education in young learners' classrooms. Songs are particularly necessary for young learners to improve their listening skills. They also accept that songs are enjoyable and of pedagogical significance because songs give many opportunities for young students to demonstrate their abilities in various language areas. In adopting the same questionnaire, the current study benefits from the established research. This study is, however, different from the Sevik study concerning the participants' cultural background.

A research study entitled "Teachers and students' attitudes to music in UAE language schools" was conducted in a similar context with Saudi Arabia, Hejjawi (2007) which looks at using music in English language language classrooms in the UAE and the attitudes of teachers and students to musical use in language teaching or learning. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was used. 80 professional high school and college teachers and 80 high- and high-school students were involved. Her results show that teachers on both levels had difficulties in using songs and integrating music. People assume that it takes time to use songs, and they have no computer to use songs in their schools. They chose to ignore it therefore. Her results reveal the important religious and cultural considerations of the participating Arab teachers which prevented the majority of them from singing in their language classrooms. Just a small number of students, however, had significant religious reservations about listening to music and accepting songs in their ESL classrooms. Most students valued Muslim teaching in their language classes, which does not encourage musical backgrounds.

Activities and Stages

There are various activities that can be created through the use of songs, for instance knowledge gaps, synonyms and antonyms, vocabulary learning, discussion and questions about abbreviations or slangs (Perez, 2013). Three steps are taken to carry

out these operations. In this stage, students should be prepared for what and what they will hear. The first stage will be pre-listening. The second stage is listening, and students are tracking their understanding and concentrating on listening to the text during this stage. They find a reply, e.g., to fill the holes, to fit, to answer multiple choices or to questions about the songs openly. The ultimate stage is after listening. In addition to listening, students practice other competences. Students may at this point develop their speech skills by explaining how they feel following the songs (Keskin, 2011).

Methods and Procedures

Introduction:

This chapter deals with the study method, population, and sample, in addition to the tool, validity, reliability, variables, procedures and statistical processes. Surveying, descriptive and analytic method was used for its suitability for the study purposes.

Study Population and Sample:

The study population consists of all English language teachers who teach basic grades (1-4) at Ramallah schools.

The study sample consists of (35) individuals who are English language teachers, males, and females, who teach basic grades (1-4) at Ramallah schools.

The two samples were selected randomly

Table (1):

The distribution of the teachers study sample according to the independent variable

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	20	57.1
	Female	15	42.9
Qualification	B.A	29	82.9
	M.A	6	17.1
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	5	14.3
	5-10 years	20	57.1
	More than 10 years	10	28.6
Total		35	100.0

Instrumentation:

Questionnaire for collecting data has been developed after surveying some previous studies dealing with the same subject. The questionnaire consists of three parts as the following:

Part One

It includes the data and information about the respondents and instructions of filling the questionnaire and a reference to that the information will remain highly confidential and will not be used except for the scientific research only.

Part Two

It includes general information dealing with the independent variables of the study such as gender, qualification and years of experience for the teachers who teach basic grades (1-4) at Ramallah schools.

Part Three

This part includes 22 items dealing with the questions that all English language teachers will response.

Validity:

The study tool was subjected to the test by experts who recommended it for its validity to achieve the study purposes.

Reliability:

Was tested by using Chronapach Alpha test which was (0.810) for the teachers' responses. This result is acceptable for study purposes.

Procedures:

The study has been made according to the following:

Preparing the study tool, the study sample is identified. Distribution of the questionnaire, gathering the questionnaire, statistically processing by using the statistical package for social science (SPSS), gathering the responds, results, and recommendations.

Study Design:

The study includes the following variables:

- Independent variables:

Gender, qualification, and years of experience for the teachers.

- Dependent variables:

Means, standard deviations, percentages and estimation level of the study sample on its questions about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners from the English language teachers' perspectives.

Statistical processing:

After gathering the response, they have been codified, entered the computer and statically processed by using the statistical package for social science (SPSS).

The statistical procedures used in the study are:

- Frequencies means standard deviations and percentages.
- Chronapach Alpha formula.
- T-test for two independent samples, and.
- One Way ANOVA test

Results and Recommendations

Introduction:

This study seeks to identify the impact of the use of English songs in the development of the language skills and the listening skills among (1-4) elementary grades of

teachers. It also aims to recognize multiple study variables such as sex, skills and years of experience.

A teachers questionnaire consisting of (22) items was created to achieve the research goal by distribution among (35) study sample teachers, collection, codification, computer entry and statistical processing through the use of the statistics social sciences kit (SPSS).

The Study's Results:

For achieving the question purpose, means, standard deviations and estimation level for each item were used.

The means were transformed into percentages according to the following scale:

- More than 80.0 Very High
- From 70-79.9 High.
- From 60-69.9 Medium
- From 50-59.9 Low
- Less than 50 Very Low.

And the following tables show the study results about its questions:

The Results of the Main Question

The question was “What is the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among the first- four elementary grade learners from the English language teachers' perspectives?”

Table (2):

Means, standard deviations, percentages, and estimation level for the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners from the English language teachers' perspectives in descending order

No.	No . in the questionnaire	Item	Mean	standard deviations	Percentage	Estimation Level
1.	13	Songs help to keep learning process manageable	4.48	0.56	89.6	Very High
2.	2	Songs facilitate the development of speaking skills	4.40	0.73	88.0	Very High
3.	1	Songs motivate students to involve in group work	4.40	0.91	88.0	Very High
4.	22	I think the time allowed for English period is not enough to use songs properly	4.37	0.80	87.4	Very High
5.	19	I think songs should be accompanied with different types of music inside the classroom	4.37	0.80	87.4	Very High

6.	21	I think songs minimize cultural differences among native language and English	4.34	0.84	84.8	Very High
7.	11	I always use songs when learning the English language	4.20	0.83	84.0	Very High
8.	6	Songs provide opportunities to achieve desired performances	4.17	0.82	83.4	Very High
9.	15	Songs minimize the gap between local accent and English language	4.14	0.73	82.8	Very High
10.	17	Songs included in pupils' books help them to learn new vocabulary easily	4.08	0.78	81.6	Very High
11.	5	Songs encourage positive attitudes towards English language	4.05	0.96	81.0	Very High
12.	14	Songs enable learners to pronounce words and sentences more accurately	4.05	0.83	81.0	Very High
13.	3	They increase the understanding of aural listening skill	4.05	0.87	81.0	Very High
14.	9	Songs make the learning process more fun	4.05	0.68	81.0	Very High
15.	10	Songs help students to express themselves freely	4.00	0.76	80.0	Very High
16.	16	Songs included in pupils' books are interesting and suitable to pupils' level of learning	3.94	0.90	78.8	High
17.	8	Songs help learners to deal frankly with problems of learning	3.88	0.86	77.6	High
18.	20	I think songs enable shy students to be involved with others	3.88	0.96	77.6	High
19.	18	Songs included in pupils' books are not sufficient	3.62	0.97	72.4	High
20.	7	Songs save times to achieve the goals of each unit	3.57	0.88	71.4	High
21.	4	Songs encourage peer dialogue	2.88	1.32	57.6	Low
22.	12	I think songs don't help pupils develop their English language	1.80	1.07	36.0	Very Low
Total degree			3.94	0.27	78.8	High

Table (2) shows that the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners from the English language teachers' perspectives scored (3.94) which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest mean was for the item (Songs help to keep the learning process manageable) which

scored (4.48). The lowest was given for the item (I think songs do not help pupils develop their English language) which scored (1.80).

The Results of the Second Question:

Are there statically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between teachers' responds about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's gender, qualification and years of experience?

To answer the second question, the following study hypothesis has been tested:

The Results of the Study Hypothesis

1. Results of the First Hypothesis:

There are no statically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between teachers' responds about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's gender.

To test the first study hypothesis, t-Test for Independent Samples test was used, and table (3) shows the results.

Table (4)

Independent two-sample t-test result of about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's gender:

Total Degree	Gender	N	Mean	S. D	T	Sig.*
	Male	20	3.87	0.24	-1.668	0.105
	Female	15	4.03	0.29		

*** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.**

Table (4) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners attributed to the variable of gender. The significant was (0.105) which is more than (0.05).

2. Results of the Second Hypothesis:

There are no statically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between teachers' responds about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's qualification.

To test the second study hypothesis, t-Test for Independent Samples test was used, and table (5) shows the results.

Table (5)

Independent two-sample t-test result of the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's qualification:

Total Degree	Qualification	N	Mean	S. D	T	Sig.*
	B.A	29	3.92	0.28	-1.047	0.303
	M.A	6	4.05	0.24		

***. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.**

Table (5) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills

among (1-4) basic grades learners attributed to the variable of qualification. The significant was (0.105) which is more than (0.05).

3. Results of the Third Hypothesis:

There are no statically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between teachers' responds about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's experience.

To test the third study hypothesis, the *One Way ANOVA* test was used, and tables (6 and 7) show the results.

Table (6)

Descriptive statistics of the variable of experience :

Total Degree	Experience	N	Mean	S. D
	Less than 5 years	5	3.89	0.13
	5-10 years	20	3.96	0.30
	More than 10 years	10	3.94	0.29
	Total	35	3.94	0.27

Table (7)

One Way ANOVA Test for the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners due to teacher's experience

the influence of using English songs		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	Between Groups	.020	2	0.010	.125	0.883
	Within Groups	2.586	32	0.081		
	Total	2.607	34			

***. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level**

Table (5) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level about the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners attributed to the variable of experience. The significance was (0.883) which is more than (0.05).

Discussion:

According to the teacher's perspectives, the influence of using English songs in developing speaking and listening skills among (1-4) basic grades learners was high, Songs help to keep learning process manageable, They facilitate the development of speaking skills, Songs motivate students to involve in group work, songs minimize cultural differences between native language and English. Songs provide opportunities to achieve desired performances, Songs minimize the gap between local accent and English language, and Songs included in pupils' books help them to learn new vocabulary easily. Songs encourage positive attitudes towards the English language. They enable learners to pronounce words and sentences more accurately;

they increase the understanding of aural listening skill. Songs make learning process more fun and Songs help students to express themselves freely.

According to teachers, time allowed for English period should be increased, songs should be accompanied with different types of music inside classroom, they use songs when learning the English language, they do not encourage peer dialogue and they help pupils develop their English language

The teachers' responses show no statistically significant differences in their responses towards attributed to the variable of gender, qualification and years of experience.

Recommendations:

According to the study results, the researcher has recommended the following suggestions:

1. Further studies about the benefits of songs and its role in learning English should be conducted.
2. Modern techniques of songs should be designed in a way that increases the students' achievement and participation in the classroom.
3. Using songs should be according to the curricula designed in a way that increases learning English.
4. Using songs in the learning process to make it more entertaining and funnier.

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