

The Effectiveness of a Suggested Program Based on English Songs on Developing Primary School Pupils' Vocabulary, Grammar and Their English Language Learning Interest

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using a proposed program based on English songs in developing sixth year, primary school pupils' vocabulary, grammar and their English language learning interest. Thirty pupils were chosen from a large population enrolled in Raniah governorate primary school, Saudi Arabia.

The present study used a pre- experimental pre- post group design. The research group was exposed to pre and post means of getting data. Tools of the present study included a written test in the acquisition of the target vocabulary, a written test in the acquisition of the target grammar, a suggested program and a language learning interest questionnaire.

Analysis of the data by means of the "t" Test for both the pre- post tests and the questionnaire indicated significantly better post achievement gains. The researcher concluded that the proposed program had a positive effect on the pupils' acquisition of vocabulary and grammar and their English language learning interest was enhanced. Finally, the study carries important implications and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: *English Grammar, English vocabulary, Effectiveness, Language learning interest*

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Introduction

Nowadays teaching methods and forms got through many innovative changes during a period of several years. Mass development of information and communication technologies, new education programs, multimedia technology. All these urge teachers to improve English language teaching and use amazing tools to make their teaching more motivational, funnier and effective.

According to Slattery and Willis (2006) motivating learners in education is considered to be one of the most important fields. Pupil's success in the educational process is not determined only by his innate abilities but also by other stimuli. The task of the teacher is to support and develop these impulses. Motivation is one of these stimuli. Motivation helps to develop pupils positively. Suitable motivational activities of teachers can increase and maintain pupil's interest in learning, particular subject or other learning activities.

In order to appeal to young learners' learning styles, Ara (2009) stated that songs, rhymes and games can be very effective tools for teaching children a foreign language. These tools can be used in children's classes to utilize their natural ability to learn a language. Children learn better through interesting activities and for this reason songs, rhymes and games are very useful tools for teaching them a foreign language.

Saricoban et al. (2010) maintained that songs contain authentic, informal language that is natural to the ear. Songs offer precious resources that develop students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Songs appear at every stage as well as age of human growth from infancy to childhood and into adulthood.

Curtain (2004) stated that "the main factor in building foreign language proficiency is the amount of time spent for learning the language. He stated, "When language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness".

Ara (2009) added; although children have immense ability to learn a language, the methods and techniques of teaching children are not same as they are for adults and a wrong method of teaching could bring a totally opposite result.

Brewster (2004) indicated that children learn a second language better if they have more opportunities to be exposed to it. They also acquire a language by using all their senses and by getting fully involved. They feel motivated and learn better if a natural and stress free environment can be provided in the language class.

Teaching Vocabulary Using Songs:

Songs are not only means of creating a relaxed atmosphere, interest, enthusiasm but they are also an excellent medium for teaching vocabulary and the melody of the English language. Learning vocabulary is one of the key elements in learning a foreign language and has always caused students difficulties. Thornbury (2002) stressed the importance of learning vocabulary by stating that "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.

Saricoban & Metin,(2010) added that songs contains a variety of vocabulary that can easily be adjusted to the appropriate age or level of learning. It is full of phrases and

expressions that will prepare children for using genuine language. The creativity of songs encourages the students' imagination and enables original learning.

Polio and Duff (1994) posited that "There are numerous things that can be taught to young children through songs that will remain with them throughout their lives and there are songs to be found about most elementary concepts like letters, numbers, colors, weekdays, months, seasons, body parts and clothes that will make the lessons full of life and excitement. These different concepts can be taught to young learners in simple and effective ways.

Teaching Grammar Using Songs:

According to Scrivener (2003) grammar is not just a dry list of facts and rules. It is in our heads and it is a living resource that gives us the ability to communicate our ideas and Feelings and to understand what other people say or write to us.

Scott and Ytreberg (1990) posited that young children are wonderful in absorbing new language. They can get maximum of language through games and activities that they find funny. Their success in learning foreign language does not depend on their knowledge of grammar. They can use grammatical structures very well, they can speak language clearly, but they are not able to say why they use particular structure. Some pupils are able to deal with simple grammar at the age of ten or eleven. Teachers, of course, should be aware of grammar and structures that they want their pupils to know. But they should teach just a minimum of grammar and what is important, the older pupils only.

Songs have long been recognized as fun and child-friendly tools in both First and Second Language Acquisition. Phillips (1993) addressed teachers who teach grammar by saying it is very important to do it in context. For children it is necessary to have lots of opportunities and chances to use the new language in their real lives. Pupils have to learn new structures and rules in depth; they should feel that they can use what they have learnt for everyday communication.

Harmer (1998) stated that it is not easy to learn a new structure the first time pupils meet it. The more times pupils are exposed to the structure, the more sense it will give them.

Language learning interest:

Almost all modern theorists agree that interest is a crucial stimulator for learning. Oxford and Shearin (1994) analyzed a total of 12 motivational theories or models, including those from socio-psychology, cognitive development, and socio-cultural psychology, and identified six factors that impact motivation in language learning; Attitudes, Beliefs about self, Goals, Involvement, Environmental support and Personal attributes.

Some of the researchers such as Liuoliene and Metiuniene (2006) and Dornyi (2003) stated that Literature classifies interest and motivation into integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to having an interest not only in the language, but also in the community who speaks the language, a desire to stimulate

the culture as well as the language .Instrumental motivation, on the other hand refers to the desire for learning the target language to use it as a tool to achieve non – interpersonal purposes such as passing an exam or obtaining a job.

Hidi (2006) stressed that interest may serve to jumpstart the struggling reader in any subject area because when learners are interested they are attentive and focused. Hence students feel joyful while participating in the interesting activities; therefore it is important to motivate their learning activities and intend to provide suitable learning activities and intend to provide a suitable learning atmosphere with the attempt to help students reinforce their learning interest on English learning. Dornyei (2002) stated that the learner’s enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are the key determinant of success or failure.

Four factors that can be dangerous to the learners’ interest, according to Harmer (1991) are the following:

1. Physical condition which means the atmosphere in class.
2. Method of teaching which refers to the way that students are taught must affect their motivation.
3. The teachers as the most powerful variable of motivation and demotivation can become a major part in demotivating the learners.
4. Success refers to the appropriate level of challenge designed by the teachers.

Brinton (1991) stated that in teaching and testing English songs the following should be taken into consideration:

- 1- An EFL teacher does not have to be a good singer or musician to use songs in the classroom.
- 2- Every song should be pedagogically meaningful and purposeful.
- 3- It is very important to grasp the fundamental qualities and special traits of songs before we can make the best of them to meet our demands.
- 4- In selection and use of songs, we must take into account such factors as student backgrounds and relevancy to the course syllabus, and linguistic skills to be trained.

Significance of the study:

As a supervisor of the teaching practice in many schools the researcher observed the following:

- 1- Most of the teachers take classes by sitting all the time and giving children instructions to write something. As all instructions are given in Arabic, children did not get any input of spoken English.
- 2- Teachers encouraged memorization rather than the creative production of English language.
- 3- Grammatical rules were explained without context although they were supposed to follow communicative language teaching.
- 4- Not a single attempt was made for fun activities in any of the classes.

Reviewing the literature as well as having informal interviews with teachers and staff members helped the researcher disclose some interesting facts and reach these points

and see the needs of the present study. Based on literature reviewed, it is clear that the majority of studies on the use of songs in teaching vocabulary and grammar were conducted on native speakers.

To the knowledge of the researcher, empirical studies on Saudi learners using songs in teaching vocabulary and grammar are rare. This makes it necessary to conduct a study on Saudi learners. Very few Saudi- teachers who may have the knowledge of using songs in teaching vocabulary and grammar, they find themselves shy to apply it in their classrooms and the same thing for the students. Some of them think using songs is against the teachings of Islam.

Statement of the problem:

The problem of the present study can be stated in the following major question:

What is the effectiveness of a suggested program based on English songs in developing primary school pupils' vocabulary, grammar and their English language learning interest?

Questions of the study:

- 1- What is English songs-based program? What does literature say about teaching using songs?
- 2- How can English songs-based program be effective in developing primary school pupils' vocabulary?
- 3- How can English songs-based program be effective in developing primary school pupils' grammar?
- 4- How can an English songs-based program be effective in enhancing primary school pupils' English language learning interest?

Objectives of the study:

The present study aims at answering the previously stated questions.

Research Hypotheses:

- 1- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pupils on the pre-post test of the acquisition of vocabulary favoring the post one.
- 2- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pupils on the pre-post test of the acquisition of grammar favoring the post test.
- 3- There would be a statistically significant difference between the research group pre-post scores on the language learning interest questionnaire favoring the post one.

Research procedures:

- 1- Reviewing the pertinent research and literature.
- 2- Introducing a theoretical background.
- 3- Designing the frame for the training program.
- 4- Preparing the program based on English songs.
- 5- Building up the acquisition test for vocabulary and grammar and the language learning interest questionnaire.
- 6- Judging the validity and appropriateness of the program, tests and the questionnaire, by a jury of TEFL specialists.

- 7- Piloting the tests, the questionnaire and some parts of the program on a small group of pupils to measure their reliability and validity and duration. Then, modifying the program, the tests and the questionnaire in the light of the jury opinions and the pilot study.
- 8- Administering the acquisition tests in the vocabulary and grammar for pupils of sixth year primary and the language learning interest questionnaire prior to the treatment (pre-testing) to assess the acquisition of the pupils in vocabulary and grammar and their language learning interest before teaching the program.
- 9- Administering the acquisition test and the language learning interest questionnaire after the treatment (post- testing).
- 10- Analyzing the data statistically.
- 11- Discussing the results obtained.

Limitations of the study:

- 1- This study was limited to 30 male pupils, Raniah governorate primary school, Saudi Arabia. The researcher chose the sixth year pupils for the following reasons:
 - a- Sixth year primary pupils are learning English for the first time.
 - b- They are coming from totally different stages of education especially in studying a foreign language, they receive general courses.
 - c- Sixth year primary pupils, Raniah governorate primary school, Saudi Arabia has never received any instruction in teaching vocabulary and grammar using songs.
 - d- Most studies assured the fact that pupils of this age (12-16) have a strong tendency to participate in dramatic activities and they always prefer to do that spontaneously. Curtain (2004), Ara (2009).
- 2- The program consists of sixteen lessons for both vocabulary and grammar.

Lessons for vocabulary:

- 1- Alphabetical letters.
- 2- Numbers.
- 3- Parts of the body.
- 4- Colors.
- 5- Family members.
- 6- Days of the week.
- 7- Times of the day.
- 8- Classroom instructions.

Lessons for grammar:

- 1- Pronouns.
- 2- Verb to be.
- 3- Article (a-an).
- 4- Question words. (Who, when, what).
- 5- Can.
- 6- Plurals.
- 7- There is
- 8- Present simple.

The instructional time amounted to two months.

Definition of terms:

English Grammar:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language offers the following definitions:

- a. The study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences.
- b. The study of structural relationships in language or in a language, sometimes including pronunciation, meaning, and linguistic history. The present study defines grammar as the ability of the pupils to form correct sentences grammatically.

English Vocabulary:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language offers the following definitions:

1. All the words of a language.
2. The sum of words used by, understood by, or at the command of a particular person or group. The present study defines it as the words, phrases which help the learner to form a sentence, understand English or express himself in a right way.

Effectiveness:

According to El-Gammal (1994)" It is the ability to achieve desired goals and outcomes. This study defines it as the ability of the proposed EFL Music- based program to develop sixth graders vocabulary and grammar skills and also enhance their English language interest.

A song:

Oxford (2000) defined it as a short piece of music with words you can sing. The present study defines it as a set of nicely rhymed words, accompanied by music that is usually repetitive.

Language learning interest:

According to Hidi (2006) learners are interested when they attentive and focused, which often results in better strategy use, deeper levels of comprehension and more reliable retrieval of information. According to this research: "Language learning interest refers to enjoyment and desire that sixth year primary school pupils will get toward learning the English language through the use of a suggested program based on English songs."

Material and Methods:

1-The Experimental Design:

The present study started in the first term of the academic year (2011-2012) and lasted for two months. Four hours a week were devoted to teaching vocabulary and grammar using the direct method in teaching.

2- Group of the Research:

- a- The Pilot group: A group of the thirty six year primary pupils.
- b- The Main group: Thirty six year primary pupils in Raniah governorate, Al-Taif, Saudi Arabia was randomly selected to participate in the experiment.

3- Variables of the Research:

- The independent variable is: Training six year primary pupils, Raniah governorate, Al-Taif, Saudi Arabia in effective program based on English songs.
- The dependent variables are:
 - Pupils' acquisition of English vocabulary.
 - Pupils' acquisition of English grammar.
 - Pupils' English language learning interest level.

4- Tools of the research:

- a- Program based on English songs.
- b- The acquisition of English vocabulary test.
- c- The acquisition of English grammar test.
- d- The English language learning interest questionnaire.

Designing the program went through the following procedures :

- Preparing the frame work of the program: The frame work of the program included general and behavioral objectives, content areas, teaching tools, teaching techniques activities and evaluation items.
- Evaluating the frame of the program by a jury of TEFL specialists to decide how far objectives content areas, and evaluation tools suit each other and how far the program suit group of the study and then suggested modification has been made.
- Building the whole program.
- Judging the whole program by the same jury for its general form and content.
 - The content of the program included two parts; vocabulary and grammar. It contains sixteen lessons. Eight lessons related to vocabulary and eight lessons related to grammar. The program begins with general objectives and branches out into a number of behavioral objectives. Each lesson starts with a number of behavioral objectives and includes a guided practice and an independent practice. In each lesson the teacher models the strategy using the think aloud technique. The lessons end with evaluation exercises to assess pupils' progress. The researcher adapted the material of the program from different resources.

Criteria of selecting the materials:

According to Texas center for reading and language Arts (2000) there are certain criteria for selecting the material:

- a. Be at the students' level which means the students' ability to decode about 80to 90% of the words correctly.
- b. Have themes and supporting details.
- c. Have one main idea in the topic.
- d. Provide context that help students connect information.
- e. Familiarity of the topics to the pupils.
- f. Suitability for testing the vocabulary skills.
- g. Linguistic difficulty and length.

Evaluation technique:

Two types of evaluation were used in the present research: formative and summative. The procedures of formative evaluation consisted of a set of questions given to the pupils after each lesson to assess the pupils' acquisition. The second type of evaluation is summative it is considered the end of the experiment taking the form of the post administration of the tests and the questionnaire to assess the pupils' acquisition of vocabulary and grammar and their language learning interest.

- Duration of the suggested program:

Sixteen hours divided into 16 sessions, two sessions a week.

- Instructional Aids:

- A computer or a laptop was used.
- Classroom board.

- Validity of the suggested program:

Verifying the validity of the program, a copy of the objectives, the program, and the tools teaching techniques was submitted to a panel of jury to determine the face validity of the program and to decide on:

- Deriving and stating the general and behavioral objectives of the program.
- Judging the validity of the objectives by a jury of five staff members as for:
 - Linguistic stating of the items.
 - Belongingness of behavioral objectives to the general goals.
 - How far the objectives can be achieved.
 - How far the objectives suit the subjects of the study.
 - Appropriateness of the methodology used in the teaching.

- Piloting the program:

The researcher conducted a pilot study that lasted one month. The researcher implemented the first five lessons of the program. The pilot study aimed at ensuring the clarity of instructions, suitability of the linguistic level of the material to the subjects and determining the time the pupils need to complete each lesson as well as the approximate time needed for the whole program. Tools of the study were also administered to the pilot study.

An achievement Test in the Acquisition of vocabulary:

Objectives of the test:

It was designed to assess students' achievement level in the acquisition of vocabulary.

Construction of the test:

The test consists of 47 items. These items represent the specific objectives of the program.

Procedures of designing the test:

1. Identifying the objectives of the test.
2. Suggesting items of the test and judging them by jury members.
3. Modifying the test according to the jury members' suggestions.
4. Piloting the test to ensure the clarity of instructions, suitability of linguistic level to the subjects.

Pupils need 90 minutes to answer questions of the test. The items of questions as following: a - Blank-filling. b - Multiple-choice. c - Matching. d - Dialogues. e - Sentence making.

The former three types are mechanic drills aimed at the conceptual instill and habituation of the targeted vocabulary and grammar, while the other two are communicative types of drills aimed at enhancing students' active and natural use of the language learned from the songs.

Reliability of the test:

In order to establish its reliability, the test was administered to a pilot sample of thirty six year primary pupils one month later the test was re-administered by using the test retest method. The reliability coefficient of the test is (0.78).

Instructions of the test:

Test instructions are written in English and Arabic because it is the first time for them to be tested. They are brief simple to understand and free from any possible ambiguities.

Scoring the test:

Two scores were allotted for each correct answer.

Time of the test:

The average time of this test was (90) minutes.

An achievement Test in the Acquisition of Grammar :

Objectives of the test:

It was designed to assess students' achievement level in the acquisition of grammar.

Construction of the test:

The test consists of (27) items. These items represent the specific objectives of the program. The questions were selected on the bases of the following criteria:

- 1- Familiarity of the questions to the pupils.
- 2- Suitability for testing the grammatical skills.
- 3- Linguistic difficulty and length.

Procedures of designing the test:

- 1- Identifying the objectives of the test.
- 2- Suggesting items of the test and judging them by jury members.
- 3- Modifying the test according to the jury members' suggestions which were:
 - Repeating the songs more than one so that the pupils understand them and answer questions .
 - Replacing some difficult words with easy ones to suit the pupils' level.
 - Restating some sentences and questions in the test.

Piloting the test:

To ensure the clarity of instructions, suitability of linguistic level to the subjects and to determine the validity and reliability and time limit, results indicated clarity of instructions and suitability of test's linguistic level to the subjects. Pupils need (90) minutes to answer questions of the test. The items of the test are the same as in the vocabulary test.

Reliability of the test:

In order to establish its reliability, the test was administered to a pilot sample of thirty six year primary pupils one month later the test was re-administered by using the test retest method. The reliability coefficient of the test is (0.84).

Instructions of the test:

Test instructions are written in English and Arabic because it is the first time for them to be tested.

Scoring the test:

Two points were allotted for each correct answer.

Time of the test:

The average time of this test was (90) minutes.

The language learning interest questionnaire:

Designing the questionnaire:

To build the language learning interest questionnaire the researcher reviewed literature and previous studies that have dealt with language learning interest.

- Some modifications were suggested.
- The final version of the questionnaire after modification included nine statements.

The pilot experiment of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire was administered to group of thirty six year primary pupils in order to recognize the following:

The validity of the questionnaire:

The researcher used the following:

Logical validity:

That was based on following suggestions of a group of experts in the field and making required modifications in the light of their direction concerning :

- The suitability of the pupils for the purpose of the questionnaire.
- The elimination or modification of any ambiguous or any inappropriate statements,
- The addition of certain statements.

Reliability of the questionnaire:

The reliability coefficient was (0.83) which is significant at (0.01). Thus the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was shown to be acceptable.

Significance of questionnaire responses:

The questionnaire responses were assigned the scores (1-2-3-4-5) to represent the items (strongly agree – agree- agree to some extent – disagree – strongly disagree).

Findings and discussion:

1- Discussing First Research Hypothesis : Table (1)

T – Test Results of the Mean Scores Obtained by Pupils on the Pre-Post test of the Acquisition of Vocabulary

| Administration | No. of Subjects | Means | Standard Deviation | Degree of freedom | "t" Value | Statistical significance |
|----------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Pre | 30 | 7.16 | 3.82 | 29 | 9.8 | **0.01 |
| Post | | 17.95 | 4.19 | | | |

Table (1) shows a comparison of the mean scores gained by the research subjects in the pre-post test of acquisition of vocabulary. The obtained "t" value (9.8) is significant at (0.01). This supports the first hypothesis and affirms that the pupils' acquisition of vocabulary underwent a considerable improvement as a result of being trained by the suggested program. This result is in agreement with a large number of studies conducted in the past decades as they revealed the relationship between acquiring vocabulary and English songs. Orlova (2008), Iliciukiene (2005), El-Hadidy(2003), Tharwat (2008). They recommended that songs should be included in TEFL for the following reasons:

- 1- Adding variety and enjoyment to the language lesson.
- 2- Improving pupils' pronunciation.
- 3- Presenting a topic, a language point, lexis, etc.
- 4- Providing a relaxed atmosphere inside the classroom.
- 5- Providing a variety and fun to learning.
- 6- Teaching vocabulary.
- 7- Teaching grammar.
- 8- Enhancing long term memory.
- 9- Helping teachers get closer to their pupils.

Discussing the second research hypothesis:

Table (2)
T – Test Results of the Mean Scores Obtained by Pupils on the Pre-Post test of the Acquisition of Grammar

| Administration | No. of Subjects | Means | Standard Deviation | Degree of freedom | "t" Value | Statistical significance |
|----------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Pre | 30 | 5.24 | 2.70 | 29 | 12.62 | **0.01 |
| Post | | 15.73 | 3.48 | | | |

Table (2) shows a comparison of the mean scores gained by the pupils in the pre-post test of acquisition of grammar. Comparing the results based on pre-post- test shows the pupils achieved a high significant degree of improvement in favor of the post- test performance. Mean scores of the pupils in on the post- test were significantly higher those on the pre- test. The obtained "t" value (12.62) is significant at (0.01). This supports the second hypothesis and affirms that the pupils' acquisition of grammar improved as a result of being trained by the suggested program. Therefore, it can be concluded that the suggested program highly affected the pupils' acquisition of grammar. This result is in agreement with a large number of studies conducted in the past decades as they revealed the relationship between acquiring grammar and using English songs. Scrivener (2003) and Brewster (2004)

Discussing the third Hypothesis:

Table (3)
T – Test Results of the Mean Scores Obtained by Pupils on the Pre-Post Test of the Language Learning Interest Questionnaire

| Administration | No. of Subjects | Means | Standard Deviation | Degree of freedom | "t" Value | Statistical significance |
|----------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Pre | 30 | 5.18 | 2.96 | 29 | 10.43 | **0.01 |
| Post | | 12.30 | 2.11 | | | |

Table (3) shows a comparison of the mean scores gained by the pupils in the pre-post test of language learning interest questionnaire. Mean scores of the pupils in on the post test were significantly higher those on the pre- test. The obtained "t" value (10.43) is significant at (0.01). This implies that the pupils' language learning interest was enhanced after they have received a program on English songs this was supported by some of previous studies. Campbell (2007), Slattery and Willis (2006) Dornyei (2003) ,Hidi (2006) ,Dornyei (2002).

Steps Followed in Teaching program

The following procedures were followed the lessons:

- 1- Asking pupils to go through the main objects of the lesson.
- 2- Brainstorming the pupils to produce the most relevant known words.
- 3- Giving the pupils a short presentation about the content of the lesson.
- 4- Dividing the pupils into pairs to enable them to learn from each other, the pupils were supposed to demonstrate what he / she understands.
- 5- Asking the pupils to work in groups to dramatize, act the roles.
- 6- Asking the pupils to relax and speak naturalistically.
- 7- Asking the pupils direct questions to test their background.

Conclusion:

Throughout the discussion of the results, it has become clear that training six graders primary pupils on a suggested program on using English songs in teaching vocabulary and grammar had a significant role in improving pupils' vocabulary and grammatical skills. This is reflected in the significant "t" value of the test as a whole. The program proved to be effective.

Recommendations:

- 1- Using songs could be used in teaching EFL in all the stages of the lesson.
- 2- Training EFL primary teachers to use songs in their lessons. .
- 3 –Text books should be accompanied with CDs to encourage pupils and parents to use them at home.
- 4 -It is suggested that curriculum designers and practitioners rely heavily on materials that encourage using songs in teaching EFL.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

- 1- Replicated the present study to be administered to a wide number of pupils.
- 2- Applying the research to students of prep school..
- 3- Empirical studies are needed to investigate if using English songs is influenced by personality factors (e. g. age, gender, learning style, etc.)
- 4- Determining the long term effect of training in effective English songs.
- 5- Empirical research is needed to examine the relationship between English songs and language proficiency.

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