

The Effectiveness of Using Pop Songs for Developing University Students' Speaking Skills.

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Abstract

It's a bare fact that students these days lack enthusiasm, motivation and interest to learn English in a conventional way, this is the main reason why we as teachers should all keep an eye on the more engaging and involving activities, One of the progressive ways to bring variety into the classroom is integrating English songs in the adult EFL classes. The use of songs has a significant impact on educational settings in general and EFL in particular. Students do not find English textbooks to be particularly fascinating. It is hardly surprising that many students consider English language study as a tedious and insurmountable obstacle. In reality, English learning can be implemented in a more pleasurable and easy manner. Using pop songs in educational settings has a significant impact.

Then, how might pop songs increase English language proficiency in EFL classrooms? This study will investigate the relationship between listening to English pop songs and developing speaking skills in EFL classrooms. This study will give a review of theoretical and empirical evidence on English songs and education. The study investigates the impact of employing pop songs in the EFL classroom on spoken communication skills.

The outcome of the study is that English pop songs catch students' attention because they communicate English in a more natural manner than any existing textbook. Most significantly, songs serve as listening aids, enabling pupils to enhance their speaking and language skills. This study aims to develop a better understanding of the effectiveness of English pop songs as a teaching tool in EFL classrooms and to encourage language teachers to incorporate songs into their lessons.

The experiment lasted six weeks, during which time the students sung sixteen popular songs. This may have influenced the results' reliability and validity. In order to obtain more accurate and valid results, sufficient time should have been allocated to the investigation. However, if a future study includes a larger number of participants and a longer time frame, it will be more generalizable to assert that popular songs may improve EFL learners' language skills, particularly their speaking

Key Words: Pop Songs, Speaking Skills, Listening Skills, University Students, EFL, ESL

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I. Introduction

English has been widely acknowledged as an international language. Therefore, many non- English speaking countries promote English proficiency as an effort toward modernization and internalization. Writing plays an important role in EFL personal and professional lives (Corgill, 2008) and is considered one of the most important skills that EFL students need to develop. Therefore, command of good speaking skill is increasingly seen as vital to equip learners for success in the 21st century because the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital network is crucially dependent on good writing (Hyland, 2003).

Teaching language for communication is greatly asserted in EFL classrooms since communication is one of the essential twenty-first century skills. Especially, the competent to speak a language has been considered pivotal as speaking is the most common path of human communication. Thus, successful language learners are those who can communicate efficiently in the target language.

Actually communicative language teaching-abbreviated as (CLT)-refers to speaking as a communicative competence. This different from the grammar competence, which is integrated in the Grammar-Translation Method, that targets learning about language. The communicative competence involves the process of conceptualizing intonation and then deliver it as an oral production. Hanner (2001), posited that the capability of speaking fluently incorporates both knowing language characteristics

and processing intonation instantly. For example, speaking mandates speakers to choose the proper vocabulary to express their ideas. In addition, they utilize accurate pronunciation to assure the clarity of their messages and utilize what they read or listen to produce inputs for their ideas.

Additionally, learning speaking increases the capacity of vocabulary, reinforces grammar, and pronunciation. It also promotes reading, listening, and writing skills (Baker & Westrup, 2003, p. 7). Subsequently, the great majority of second and foreign language learners study a language for the sake of developing their oral proficiency (Riggenbach & Lazaraton . 1991; Ellis, 1999; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richards & Rcnandya, 2002;Ur, 2006).

II. Problem of the Study

First and second-year students at Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport have poor English speaking skills. They usually find it difficult to orally communicate and interact in English. Hence, the research attempted to investigate the effect of a suggested program based on English pop songs to improve students' speaking skills by answering the following main question:

What is the effect of a program based on English pop songs to enhance the speaking skills of Technical Colleges students?

In attempting to answer the above question, the following sub-questions will also be answered:

1. What are the necessary speaking skills for EFL college students?
2. What are the features of the program based on English pop songs?

3. How far is the program effective in enhancing the participants' speaking skills?
4. To what extent are the students satisfied with the program?

III. Delimitations of the Study

The current study is limited to:

Sample:

A group of university students (20 students) between 19: 21 years old, divided as follows: 10 students experimental group - 10 students control group.

Duration:

The duration of the program, which is up to seven weeks, three sessions per week and the duration of each session is one hour will be determined at the start of the program.

Place:

A- The place of the pilot sample and its size (50) students from International House Egypt and the first and second students of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, which is based in the Smart Village in Greater Cairo.

B- The library hall where the program sessions will be held.

This study is also confined to: its questions, theoretical framework, previous studies, methodology and procedures which will be mentioned later.

IV. Terms of the Study

Pop Songs:

"Pop songs" is a term derived from the English word "popular", which means liked and supported by many people. It is a type of songs that takes between two minutes to four minutes. It consists of a frequent sequence of lyrical passages accompanied by the use of special instruments such as electric guitar and other musical instruments. Elements of other musical styles such as Rock, Dance, Country, and Urban are often used; however, there are key elements that determine the music of popular songs. This genre of songs originated in the United States in the mid-1950s and soon spread throughout the world to the current time with more updates in the machines and sections of music and quickly spread from the field of entertainment to the field of teaching languages, including English (Shkerian, P. et al: 2016 & Alipour, M: et al:2012).

Speaking Skills:

The skills of speaking can be defined as a "verbal language performance skills that is characterized by the ease, accuracy and clarity in communicating well organized ideas in clear use of

appropriate vocabulary. The skills of speaking are divided into three main sections: cognitive skills (ideas and their consistency) - linguistic skills (Vocabulary - grammar) - Vocal skills (phonetics). The ability to speak is expressed in the degree to which the sample is obtained on the test of the speaking skills (researcher's design), and the researcher will adhere to this operational definition in his study.

V. Significance of the Study

Theoretical importance:

- The researcher noted that although there are a large number of studies that use songs to improve listening skills, there is a great lack of use of songs in improving other important skills, such as speaking skills (to the researcher's best knowledge), which gives importance to this study.
- As the researcher noted during his pilot study and the collection of scientific material another scarcity added to the above which is the use of popular songs in particular in improving the skills of speaking in English, although this type of songs specifically is very communal among different ages of learners and this type of songs is an effective way (to the researcher's knowledge) to improve English speaking skills, as well as to convey the culture of people who speak this language as a first language.
- In addition to the above, the researcher noted the lack of studies that examined the use of this type of songs (Pop Songs) for university students (to the researcher's knowledge) and this represents an importance and value for this study.

Applied importance:

- This study includes a training program for university students where the use of popular songs in improving English speaking is an important applied value that can be used in educational institutions in EFL.

- This study includes a qualitative test of English language skills (designed by the researcher), which represents a value added to the Arabic library of tests.
- In this study, the process of pairing between the field of popular songs which is one of the areas that are commonly used for entertainment and an educational field which is improving English speaking skills, represents a significant applied importance to the field of modern and innovative teaching methods.

VI. Review of Related Literature

Among all four skills, speaking is considered the most essential. Since, It engages the lexical, psychological, social and cultural components. The social element of speaking is noted when dealing with someone who may have a different cultural or social background. Speaking necessitates that students not only be able to produce specific structures of language like vocabulary or grammar (linguistic competence), but also understanding why, when and in what way to form language (socio- linguistic competence). It is the fundamental skill of any language by which individuals can deliver ideas to each other, exchange ideas and understand the world (Al-Khuli, 2000, p. 4).

Speaking Macro Skills and Micro Skills

Speaking incorporates main skills (Macro skills) and speaking sub skills (Micro skills). While Speaking Macro skills include the larger elements: fluency, function, discourse, style cohesion and non-verbal communication. Micro skills focus on producing the smaller blocks of language such as morphemes, phonemes, vocabulary, collocations and phrasal units.

Brown (2004, p.142) mentions several speaking macro skills and micro skills as below:

Speaking is an essential linguistic activity which involves various skills: Morphology and lexis (words and their parts), pronunciations (sounds), grammar and syntax (structure), discourse (conversation

and utterance), semantics, fluency (ease of speech, confidence, speed and coherence), in addition to topicality (ideas and themes) (Hedge, 2002, p.261).

The relationship between Speaking and Other Language Skills

According to Zhang (2009, p. 33), the reading process is comprised of six component skills. Among these fields of knowledge, structural knowledge and vocabulary are required for reading and impact students' speaking performance:

- 1- The skills of Recognition.
- 2- Structural knowledge and vocabulary.
- 3- Understanding formal discourse composition.
- 4- Content awareness.
- 5- Evaluation skill.
- 6- Metacognitive knowledge.

He also confirms that grammatical and lexical knowledge are two crucial aspects of second language acquisition, and that they both affect the speaking performance of learners. A strong grasp of grammar enables learners to construct sentences that are easily understood when speaking. Knowledge of vocabulary is essential for effective communication. Learners who read extensively acquire significant grammatical and lexical knowledge and master the structure of sentences, enabling them to construct their own sentences and utterances.

Dowson & Davison (2003, p. 51) confirms the implicit link between speaking and writing. Speaking and writing evolve and impact each other. Both speaking and writing are productive skills that include establishing a message for the audience. Language learners who are capable of using specific grammatical structures in their writing are usually able to use them while speaking and learners who write extensively have the ability to show amendments in speaking proficiency.

Speaking is related to the other language skills because language is a single identity in which all language skills integrate. In teaching the skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking, a lesson typically includes activities that connect listening and speaking to reading and writing, e.g. learners may need to read lecture articles / notes / or a paper in order to write a composition: learners can discuss it with the teacher / peers, they may compose a draught, then rewrite it until they finalise a final version, learners read teacher's feedback and they speak to other peers / thier teacher (Brown, 2001, p.149).

Korean researcher Choi Inson (2017) stresses his objection to the traditional methods in EFL. He states that learners obviously lack the enthusiasm, motivation and interest to learn English in the conventional way although they are exposed to several media and technology tools. This is the reason why EFL teachers need to keep an eye on the more involving and engaging teaching activities. Text books in EFL classrooms became not very engaging for students especially in the age of globalization. It is no surprise that many students think that English language learning is a boring and insuperable subject. Actually, English learning can be performed in a more enjoyable and relaxed method. One of the progressive methods to present variety into EFL classrooms is integrating English songs in the adult English learning classes. Using songs can bring a positive impact in the educational settings.

Tahani Bint Ibrahim Al-Salloum conducted a thesis study in 2015, the English language skills assessment for the first grade secondary students in Qassim region, she applied a test of English speaking skills on a sample of 187 secondary second grade students and found that their linguistic skills is intermediate in terms of knowledge and a weak degree in the field of language, fluency and pronunciation. At the end of her study, Tahani recommended to pay attention to ways of using songs in teaching English to secondary school students.

The study (Ali Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Majali: 2008) titled "Teaching English Language using Entertainment Based Activities

to Develop Some Listening and Speaking Skills for First Grade Students, he used a six-week entertainment program in which three units of the English language curriculum were used, which is equivalent to half of the English course in the semester. The control group consisted of 25 students who received for six weeks three modules of the English course just like the experimental group and But without entertainment activities. The results indicated positive statistical significance for the experimental group with the effect of the program for a long period of time indicating the positive and importance of activities in learning English.

VII. Hypotheses

After reviewing previous studies, the following hypotheses are imposed:

- 1.4.1. There will be statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental and control groups after the application of the program on the English speaking skills test. These differences are in favor of the members of the experimental group.
- 1.4.2. There will be statistically significant differences between the mean score levels of the experimental group members before and after the application of the program on the English speaking skills test. These differences are in favour of the results of the post application.
- 1.4.3. There will be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group's pre-posttest in favor of the post-test in the identified sub-skills: Expressing personal information and using common language (Lead-in) - Ability to use the target language accurately and fluently (Personal Discourse) – Debate and logical reasoning skill (Controversy).

VIII. Method

A. Design

During the summer semester of 2021, a group of 20 Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) freshman students participated in the current study. The students were between the ages of 19 and 21. These students were put in a remedial English class based on their performance on the English Language Program's admission exam (ELP).

B. Participants

During the summer semester of 2021, a group of 20 Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) freshman students participated in the current study. The students were between the ages of 19 and 21. These students were put in a remedial English class based on their performance on the English Language Program's admission exam (ELP).

C. Instruments

The four sets of instruments employed in this study—a speaking test, a semi-structured interview, a closed-ended questionnaire, and written reflections—collected the necessary data. The speaking proficiency test was given both before and after the course, whereas the other three tests were given post-experiment at the end of the treatment.

Speaking Proficiency Test:

The sample's members underwent the pre-post speaking proficiency test. Prior to the treatment, the participants' speaking abilities were evaluated as part of the pretest administration in order to determine their actual level of oral proficiency. After the course was complete, the exam was retaken to determine whether there had been any discernible improvement in the students' speaking abilities.

During both administrations, the students underwent individual examinations, and three examiners evaluated them using a modified

analytic speaking rubric (See Appendix C). The raters observed the recorded exam sessions and graded each one separately. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V.23) software was then used to obtain the average score. By calculating the correlation between the scores of the three raters and calculating the correlation coefficient, an interrater reliability study was also carried out to ascertain the degree of consistency among the raters (Johnson & Christensen, 2021).

The criteria specified by the IELTS exam were used to construct the speaking test. The test's tasks and contents were so modified from the IELTS speaking component. Additionally, the speaking test included three tasks: Lead in questions, controversy and personal conversation. Six to nine minutes each student were allocated for the test, which included giving clear instructions (See Appendix B). On the rubric for analytical speaking, the final score was 20.

Lead in Questions, which made up part one of the test, asked candidates about their studies, families, and interests. This section's inclusion was primarily conducted to measure students' proficiency with common language and to help them feel less anxious so they could perform well on the speaking examination. The questions in this segment,

Test design resources

The criteria specified by the IELTS exam were used to construct the speaking test. The test's tasks and contents were so modified from the IELTS speaking component. Additionally, the literature review helped the researcher to develop the speaking proficiency test as they checked (Banerjee, 2016), (El-Salamony, 2016), (Luoma, 2004) and (Hammerman, 2009).

3.3.1.2. Psychometric properties of the test

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V.23) software was then used to obtain the average psychometric properties and the score. By calculating the correlation between the scores of the three raters and calculating the correlation coefficient,

an interrater reliability study was also carried out to ascertain the degree of consistency among the raters.

3.3.1.2.1. Test Validity

The researcher used two methods to maintain the validity of the test:

- 1- Jury validity: the jury was given access to the preliminary version of the speaking proficiency test in order to assess how well the questions met the speaking skill and level of the candidates. The jury recommended adding some questions. One instance was the second section of the test's rounding-off questions. The following table indicates the percentages of agreement and disagreement between the arbitrators on the test statements. The researcher used Lawshe method to reach the percentage of jury panel members' agreement (The jury members are listed in Appendix A.) using (Abdelrahman, 2008, P.203).

Nyes = number of members who accepted the questions of the test
N = total number of jury members

- 2- Criterion validity: The researcher used the criterion test to verify the validity of the questions and the researcher chose the speaking test that was developed by Elsalamony (2016). Six images depicting subjects linked to the pupils' studies made up the test. They were selected to support students in expressing their thoughts, expressing agreement and disagreement, and giving reasons for their opinions. Using Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation, the results of the two administrations were correlated. The correlation coefficient was > 0.7 indicating a high level of validity.

Test-Retest Reliability

To assess the reliability of the speaking proficiency exam, a pilot was conducted. Twenty college students who were not enrolled in the study participated in the pilot test twice. Two weeks passed between the two administrations. Using Pearson's Coefficient of

Correlation, the results of the pre- and post-administrations were correlated. The correlation coefficient was 0.81, which was 0.01 levels of significance significant.

Interrater Reliability

The speaking proficiency test answers were scored by three raters, hence the interrater reliability was determined using Cronbach's Reliability Scale. The reliability coefficient was > 0.70 , and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.85, indicating a very high level of internal consistency.

3.3.1.2.5 Scoring the Test

The speaking test evaluated the candidates' oral competency by having them engage in conversations, respond appropriately to speech prompts, and participate in interacting discussions. The raters gave each candidate a grade individually, but after the test they worked together to assess the consistency. The raters used the texts and audio recordings as a reference in cases of discrepancy. Additionally, test takers were scored using an analytical rubric with scoring ranges from one to four, and not in relation to one another (See Appendix C).

Interview

A semi-structured interview was also done by the researcher. An interview, according to Johnson and Christensen (2014), is "an interpersonal contact" (P.228).

According to Farhady (1995), interviews may offer the most accurate information about a phenomenon because they give researchers the chance to observe participants' facial expressions, bodily movements, and explanations in face-to-face situations.

At the conclusion of the course, the interview was conducted in the target language. It was divided into two portions, each of which had seven already prepared questions. The first category of questions looked into how students felt about utilizing pop songs to improve their speaking abilities, as well as its advantages and drawbacks. By asking students about how much time they spent recording their songs, how many trials they recorded themselves, and whether or not they read from scripts, the second category of questions aimed to discover more about their learning habits. The interview started with clear directions and an explanation of its purpose; all interviews were taped and transcribed (See Appendix D).

Questionnaire

The current study used a close-ended questionnaire with eight questions that asked participants about their satisfaction with the

program's ability to improve their speaking abilities (See Appendix E). The survey was given out at the end of a programme.

Additionally, because the questionnaire's components were in statement form and students had a choice of five answers (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). In order to best portray their reaction, each participant was asked to select one of five options.

It should be noted that the questionnaire was only administered in the target language, although any questions were answered and clarified at that time. Additionally, the questionnaire was printed and distributed to the students, who had 15 minutes in class to complete it. To ensure accurate data collection and reduce the chance of questionnaire loss, the participants were not given the questionnaire to take home.

Written Reflections

In order to gain better understanding of their attitudes and learning habits, students wrote reflections on their experience with using pop songs by the end of the programme (Schon., 1983). These written remarks were examined to learn how the programme and the online resource were perceived by the students (See Appendix K).

3.4.4. The Posttesting

After the completion of the treatment phase, the examiner re-administered the speaking test to determine whether the implementation of the pop songs program enhanced students' speaking skills (See Appendix B).

3.4.5. Conducting the Interview

The following step was the interview. At the end of the semester, it was conducted in the target language on an individual basis. The time and location of the interview were determined in advance and notified to

the students. At the outset of the interview, participants were reassured that their remarks would not influence their grades, allowing them to relax and make candid responses (See Appendix D for the interview questions).

3.4.6. Administering the Questionnaire

The next step involved the administration of the questionnaire. The schedule of questionnaire administration was negotiated and agreed upon with the students. Students were instructed to respond honestly and were informed that the survey was anonymous. Whenever an item was ambiguous, clarification was supplied. (See Appendix E).

3.4.7. Writing Reflections

At the completion of the course, students composed reflective paragraphs using some guiding questions. These paragraphs were examined to determine the program satisfaction of the students (See Appendix K).

Statistical Analyses

To The first one demonstrates the results of the pre-posttest in terms of the overall speaking efficiency as well as each sub-skill. The second section analyzes the results of the follow-up questionnaire administered at the end of the program. Finally, the last section offers an overview of the analysis of the qualitative data from students' interviews and students' written reflections. A detailed discussion of these analyses will be provided in the next chapter.

4.1 Data Analysis Procedures

The data in this study are divided into three parts: the scores of the pre-posttest, interviews and students' written reflections, and the

responses to the questionnaire. In analyzing the scores of the pre-posttest, both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted. Firstly, the mean values and standard deviations for each parameter in the two groups (experimental group and control group) were calculated. Secondly, inferential statistics were used. Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to find if there are statistically significant differences between the two Independent groups. To further investigate the differences within each group involved in the study, similarly, a The Wilcoxon Matched-pairs-Signed Ranks Test was conducted. In addition, the Interviews and the students' written reflections were qualitatively analyzed using content analysis. Finally, the responses of the students who participated in the follow-up questionnaire were analyzed using the five-point Likert Scale to investigate their attitudes towards the program. Results will be reported in terms of the study hypotheses.

Results of the Study

The first hypothesis investigated the effect of the intervention on the oral proficiency of learners. In order to acquire quantitative data for this purpose, a post speaking proficiency test was administered. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-and post-administration scores on the speaking test for the treatment group, in favour of the post-administration score. Thus, the initial hypothesis was confirmed. Regarding the second hypothesis, the examination of the results revealed that famous songs had a statistically significant effect on each speaking subskill (P0.05), hence confirming the second hypothesis. As for the third hypothesis, there was no statistically significant change between the average post-application and follow-up scores of experimental group participants on the English speaking abilities test.

Conclusions

Popular songs have a good effect on oral proficiency, according to the findings of the current study. Meanwhile, it is reported that the students have a positive view of the curriculum. They also note that

it has more benefits than drawbacks. Listening, filling in the blanks, discussing the subjects covered in each song, and self-recording are some of the actions that learners engage in throughout programme implementation. Due to the fact that the students prefer to read from the lyrics, teachers should permit them to do so.

In spite of the study's limitations, its findings can be implemented in English language education contexts such as speaking classes, general English courses, and English for specialized purposes. Moreover, EFL teachers may utilize the findings of the study to improve their students' speaking skills, thereby filling the gaps in the EFL environment, where students do not have sufficient opportunity to practice the target language outside of the classroom.

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