

The Effect of Songs and Movies on High School Students' Language Achievement

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of song and movie on the language achievement of high school students. To conduct the study, 60 high school male and female students were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group in a learning English at Sae English Language Institute in Dehdasht. The data were collected through two instruments: a pre/post achievement test, and a questionnaire, which were both designed by the researcher. The data obtained from the administration of the test and the questionnaire were analyzed using independent samples t-tests and paired samples t-tests and the findings were compared to examine the effect of songs and movies on student's learning. The result of this study showed that the implementation of song and movie used in the study had a significant effect on student's language achievement in their listening, reading, vocabulary and grammar.

Keywords: song, movie, language achievement.

Introduction

In order to maintain student's interest in language learning when English is not seen as an important factor for their needs, teachers have to find creative ways to teach language and expand student's motivation to learn language.

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According to Biggs (1995), when all students want to learn so life would be wonderful for teachers. Students want to learn things that are interesting and meaningful for them. They don't like to go to school because they find it uninteresting to learn at school. For example, according to Mok (1990) most Chinese students show little interest and motivation to learn English at school because what they have learnt in school is not relevant to their real-life situation.

Learning English as an international language has a great importance in different levels of education in Iran, but unfortunately most of the students are not satisfied with their abilities in English after studying it for several years in their school. Of course there are different reasons for this problem, but one of the reasons which is the concern of this study is lack of motivation.

Some studies stated that integrating popular culture into language classroom could make the curriculum more relevant to students' lives and increase their motivation to learn. Scholars (Alverman, 1999; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Dyson, 1997; Gee, 2000; Knobel, 1999) state that the infusion of multimedia and pop culture referents across social domains is changing the meaning of what it means to be proficient and literate in a language.

The importance and the role of songs and movies in language teaching

Veronika (2007) claimed, songs have a place in the classroom for helping create that friendly and co-operative atmosphere for language learning, but they can offer much more. He also mentioned the idea that songs are effective tools in education.

Murphey conducted a study on 49 students who had all experienced the song-stuck-in-my-head phenomenon in some language. Analysis of the results showed that first the melody and then the lyrics from the songs get stuck and stored in memory until needed for a specific context. Therefore, he believed that songs positively influence learners' long and short-term memory (Cited in Veronika, 2007).

Lowe (1998) illustrated the impact of songs on second grade French immersion students in New Brunswick. The only difference between the control and the experimental group is 15-minute instruction each session through the integration of songs. The researcher concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group on vocabulary, grammar, and rhythmic patterns and the students were motivated by the songs' inclusion.

Kanel (1997) pointed that some research has shown that using songs improves listening comprehension, and develops pronunciation. The most important reason for using songs in the classroom would be to bring students into contact with authentic language.

According to Razmjoo (2012), there is a relation between linguistics and musicology as songs have both the communicative feature of language and the

entertaining feature of music. Songs have rhythmic and melodic content representing a specific form of communication in a linguistic sense. He suggests that the use of songs in the foreign language classrooms reflects the inherent rhythmic nature of life.

Video is seen as an important resource for use in the EFL\ESL classroom because it is dynamic, immediate and accessible (Lonergan in Walker, 1997). According to Stempleski and Tomalin video not only exposes students to the target language, but it also exposes them to non-verbal aspects of communication. Non – verbal communication is comprised of such things as gestures, expression, posture, and dress.

There are some benefits relates to using movie in the classroom. The first is relates to motivation. Films about issues that draw the learners' interest can affect their motivation to learn (Stempleski, 1992; Allan, 1985; Lonergan, 1984). When they are watching films, they can learn language components such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation. Second, the movies help the learners' comprehension by enabling them to listen to exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expression and gestures simultaneously (Allan, 1985; Sheerin, 1982), which may improve their insights into the topic of the conversations. In real life, unless they are speaking on the telephone or listening to the radio, such visual supports are present to accompany the verbal exchanges, so the existence of facial expression and gestures in the movies can simulate the dialogues in real situations. In addition to the visual supports the films also provide exposures to the language uttered in authentic settings (Stempleski,1992; Telatnik & Kruse, 1982).

The most convincing argument for using film in the classroom is the motivation it provides the students (Baltova, 2000; Lin , 2002). Films also provide a context for language learning to take place by reinforcing what students would learn in the classroom in a dramatized , authentic production (Brinton , 1991; Gebhard, 1996).

Research Questions of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify and examine the effect of song and movie as a stimulus to enhance students' learning. To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were be addressed:

1. To what extent do songs and movies affect language achievement of high school students?
2. If so, on what components and skills of language do they exert more effect?

Method

The participants were male and female students in an English language institute in a small town in the South West of Iran. They were aged 15 to 17.

There were 30 girls and 30 boys in four classes. They were required to take English courses for three hours per week. The students had 3-5 years of English education in secondary school. Before taking the tests, they were told that scores on the tests would be regarded as part of their class work grade. This encouraged them to participate more seriously in the experiments.

The materials used in this study were a pre-post test and a researcher-made questionnaire. The pre and the post test were the same to reach valid and reliable results and the aim was to determine how much the students will be achieved after the treatment. In order to homogenize the participants, pre-test as the first reliable and efficient instruments was used at the very beginning of the course. Then at the end of the course, after the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by the experts, it was given to students, in order to know students' preferences about the strategies developed in class. The validity of the questionnaire was accepted by some university professors and experienced English teachers.

Lab Equipment and Content Material

Lab equipment such as Lap Top, DVD player and a TV set were used. The content materials that were used in this study were 14 American English films, 5 English songs " Excuse me please, Tell me all about it, On the weekend, My favorite day, I wasn't born yesterday " on the basis of the content of the book. In this study researcher taught 7 units during 16 sessions. Every unit contained 2 films.

Procedures

To investigate the underlying questions of the thesis hypotheses, two groups were selected. One was the control group another was the experimental group. The participants attended English classes for 90 minute lesson periods, 2 days a week 8 sessions each month. The entire period of the experiment was 2 months. The procedural steps are listed as follows:

- a. Accessible subjects participated in this research from the total population of students.
- b. The students were assigned to two groups.
- c. The experimental and control groups were determined.
- d. A pretest was given to the students.
- e. Treatment.
- f. The post test was administered immediately after the treatment to diagnose the effect of the given treatment.
- g. Statistical analysis was carried out on the gathered data to accept or reject the null hypothesis.

First of all, the pretest was given to the students who were studying at the intermediate level in all classes to know the background knowledge of students.

Result indicated that students knew a little and there was no significant difference between the two groups and we could safely claim that the two groups were highly homogenous.

The pretest posttest control group design was as follows:

Table 1. Pretest Posttest Control Group Design

Groups NO.	Group 1 30	Group2 30
Session1	Pre-test	Pre-test
Session2-15	Teaching along with music and watching movie	Teaching without music and watching movie
Session16	Post-test	Post-test

According to table 1, the entire experiment consisted of 16 sessions for each group, at first a pre-test was administered to obtain some indication of the participant's prior knowledge. The main experiment consisted of the next 15 sessions. The first session began with the pre test. All the participants were required to take the test in class without any treatment under the supervision of the researcher. Then for several sessions experimental group will be introduced to a 15 minutes long excerpt from a movie which was in the form of a video scene such as (How was your trip?) They were instructed to watch the video scene and then researcher gave them a test. On the other hand, the control group was asked to answer the questions without any treatment.

In other sessions , the researcher chose different songs in English from a cassette or CD of Top Notch (fond B) then students were given a text in the experimental group and they were asked to listen to the song once then read the text and tried to understand the pronunciation of the words .Then again the same text was given to students in control group without any song. Researcher checked to see if students could understand the text and the pronunciation of the words without song or not.

The experimental group was taught using each song according to these steps:

- 1- Playing the song as students silently look at text and words.
- 2- Having students repeat difficult words without singing them.
- 3- Pointing out the new vocabulary and giving needed pronunciation cues and Persian equivalent.
- 4- Playing the song again, letting the students join in when they feel confident about singing along (Whittaker, 1981).

The control group listened to the spoken version following these steps,

- 1- Playing the spoken version as students looked at the words.
- 2- Having students repeat the words.
- 3- Pointing out new vocabulary and giving needed pronunciation cues, and Persian equivalents.
- 4- Playing the spoken version again . Letting students repeat it.

The time used for each text differed from 15 to 30 minute depending on the length of the text and the number of unfamiliar words contained in each text .The steps and the time used for each text in both groups were the same with the exception of music. For example the experimental group listened to the music (On the Weekend) and looked at the words silently. Then they repeated the words without singing them. New vocabulary items were pointed out. The pronunciation cues and their Persian equivalents were given. Next the song was played again, letting students join in when they felt confident about singing it. The students were taught by songs for 7 sessions. The control group was instructed through previous steps with the exception of song.

There were four steps for showing the video:

- Step 1: At first, the students watched the film then they wrote unfamiliar words, idioms, and phrases to ask the teacher later.
- Step 2: The teacher asked questions concerning the main point of the film the film and the student through retelling and paraphrasing answered the questions.
- Step 3: The film was showed one more time. In this step teacher explained everything in more details.
- Step 4: Finally, the teacher asked the students to write a summary of the movie. This was a useful writing exercise. This exercise could help the students to develop their summarizing and extracting skills and serve as a comprehension check.

Students were needed to participate in laboratory of English language Institute for 7 sessions. The time used for each film differed from 10 to 15 minute.

Finally, the post-test was given to students in order to investigate the effect of songs and movies students' learning.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data was collected through a pre test, post test and a researcher-made questionnaire.

After conducting the study, collecting the required data and gathering the questionnaire, data was statistically analyzed using Frequency, Percentage, Likert Scale, mean and t-test. A comparison between male and female was conducted to see whether there was any difference in terms of gender in the

use of popular culture or not and whether there was any differences between two groups (Experimental group and Control group).

Results and Discussion

Table 2. shows the results of the means and standard deviations of the variable in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 2. The Scores of the Subjects on the Pre- test and post-test in the two Groups

stage	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRE	experimental	30	26.9000	3.38710	.61840	738	58	.46
	control	30	26.0667	5.17909	.94557			
POST	experimental	30	35.1000	6.63507	1.21139	3.443	58	.00
	control	30	30.1333	4.28899	.78306			

To find out whether the students in both groups (experimental group, control group) are at the same level and in order to know the background knowledge of the students, a pre-test was applied. As it can be seen in table 2 the mean of the students in the experimental group in pre-test was 26 and their mean in control group was 26. To see if the mean difference between the two groups is significant, an independent samples t-test was run. The results from the above table revealed that the mean difference between the experimental and control groups was not significant (.46). Therefore, the two groups did not differ significantly in their performance in the pre-test.

After undergoing the treatment, the two groups took the post-test. As mentioned before, the same tests were administered as the post-test of achievement to reach reliable and valid results. The results are illustrated in Table 4 which shows how much the learners in both groups had achieved and whether there was any difference between the experimental and control groups regarding their performance in post-test of achievement. As shown in the above table, there is a mean difference of 5 between the two groups under study. In order to find whether the treatment given to the experimental group had caused any significant change in this group and to see if the students in the experimental group had achieved significantly higher scores on the post-test of achievement, another independent t-test was administered. The results obtained from the independent-samples t-test reveal that the experimental group outperformed the control group and the difference is highly significant.

Experimental Group's performance in different test components.

As mentioned before, the test was comprised of three sections of listening, vocabulary/grammar, and reading. To find out the area in which the learners in the experimental group progressed more, a paired samples t-test was run to compare their performance in pre and post-test of achievement in each section of the test.

Table 3. Paired Samples T-Test for Experimental Group's Listening Performance

	listening	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre listening	5.6000	30	1.37966	.25189
	Post listening	9.0333	30	2.38506	.43545

Table 3. Cont.

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Listening		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Upper	Lower			
Pair 1	Pre listening - Post listening	-3.4333	2.88496	.52672	-2.3561	-4.5106	-6.518	29	.000

The results obtained from the paired-samples t-test, as shown in Table 3 revealed that the mean difference observed between the scores of the learners in experimental group regarding their listening performance in pre and post-test of achievement is significant at .05 level of significance $p < .05$.

Table 4. Paired samples T-Test for Experimental Group's Performance in Vocabulary/Grammar

	Vocabulary-Grammar	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Vocabulary-Grammar	19.9667	30	3.35778	.61304
	Post Vocabulary-Grammar	22.8000	30	5.10848	.93268

Table 4. Cont.

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
grammar-vocabulary		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Upper	Lower			
Pair 1	grammar-vocabulary pre - grammar-vocabulary post	-2.8333	5.12656	.93598	-.9190	-4.7476	-3.027	29	.000

Similarly, according to Table 4 the mean difference between their performance in vocabulary and grammar is statistically significant at .05 level, $p < .05$.

Table 5. Paired Samples T- test for Experimental Group's reading performance

	reading	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-reading	1.5500	20	.51042	.11413
	Post-reading	3.3000	20	.86450	.19331

Table 5. Cont.

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
reading		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Upper	Lower			
Pair 1	Pre reading - Post reading	-1.7500	.91047	.20359	-1.3239	-2.1761	-8.596	19	.000

Moreover, according to Table 5, the mean difference between their performance in reading (1.7) is also statistically significant at .05 level, $p < .05$.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the three tables above that the learner in the experimental group did best firstly in the listening section of the test, secondly in the vocabulary and grammar, and finally in the reading section.

Questionnaire results

Some of the important findings are summarized in this section. Thirty students (only the experimental group) completed the questionnaire at the end of the 16th week. The students were asked not to write their names and were told to answer the questions carefully. In the last session, the learners were given 20 statements, they were asked to rank each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. On this scale 1 meant that the learners strongly agreed with the statement and 5 meant that the learners strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 6. Benefits of using song and movie in English learning

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Strongly disagree	Disagree
1	5(16.7%)	18(60%)	4(13.3%)	1(3.3%)	2(6.7%)
2	–	–	2(6.7%)	16(53.3%)	12(40%)
3	19(63.3%)	11(36.7)	–	–	–
4	6(20%)	7(23.3%)	4(13.3%)	9(30%)	4(13.3%)
5	19(63.3%)	11(36.7%)	–	–	–
6	14(46.7%)	11(36.7%)	4(13.3%)	1(3.3%)	–
7	14(46.7%)	16(53.3%)	–	–	–
8	1(3.3%)	7(23.3%)	8(26.7%)	9(30%)	5(16.7%)
9	15(50%)	14(46.7%)	1(3.3%)	–	–
10	5(16.7%)	16(53.3%)	5(16.7%)	3(10%)	1(3.3%)
11	22(73.3%)	6(20%)	1(3.3%)	1(3.3%)	–
12	–	–	5(16.7%)	10(33.3%)	15(50%)
13	–	–	1(3.3%)	11(36.7%)	18(60%)
14	16(53.3%)	9(30%)	1(3.3%)	–	4(13.3%)
15	21(70%)	6(20%)	3(10%)	–	–
16	25(83.3%)	5(16.7%)	–	–	–
17	26(86.7%)	4(13.3%)	–	–	–
18	18(56.7%)	7(26.7%)	5(16.7%)	–	–
19	17(56.7%)	10(33.3%)	3(10%)	–	–
20	11(36.7%)	8(26.7%)	6(20%)	2(6.7%)	3(10%)

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of songs and movies on language achievement of high school students.

For the purpose of this study sixty students (30 boys, 30 girls) participated in this research from the total population of students at Sae English language institute in Dehdasht (a city in south west of Iran). Then they were divided to two groups of thirty (control group, experimental group). The participant's scores were analyzed using t-test immediately after the treatment and 3 days later.

As it was indicated, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the groups in post test. The obtained results of the present study showed that the independent variable (treatment) of this study had a positive effect on the dependent variable (students' learning) in post test.

As it was shown, the experimental group outperformed the control group. It follows then that song and movie had a positive effect on second language acquisition.

The result of this study is consistent with a research conducted by Schunk (1999). He investigated the role of singing in vocabulary acquisition in case of elementary students. Results of his study indicate that music benefits vocabulary acquisition.

In the same lines Lozanov (1979) used music as a learning tool for second language teaching that emphasizes relaxed state of mind for maximum retention of material. He claimed that the atmosphere created by music enhanced the ability of the students to remember vocabulary words and shortened the study period of the foreign language.

The result of this study is also in line with a research conducted by Lowe (1998). He illustrated the impact of songs on second grade French immersion students in New Brunswick. The researcher concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group on vocabulary, grammar, and rhythmic patterns and the students were motivated by the songs' inclusion.

Based on the previous researches and the present study, it can be concluded that the role of song and movie in enhancing students' learning is meaningful.

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