

# Learning English Listening Skills through Music: A Pathway to Language Acquisition

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## Abstract

## Original Research Article

This study explores the efficacy of music as a tool for developing English listening skills among language learners. Drawing from empirical research and pedagogical theory, it examines how music enhances listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation. The article presents evidence from classroom-based interventions and surveys of ESL learners, ultimately concluding that incorporating music into English language instruction offers significant benefits for listening skill development.

**Keywords:** English Listening Skills, Music, Vocabulary Acquisition, Learner Motivation, ESL Learners, Listening Comprehension, Language Instruction.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, yet it is often regarded as one of the most challenging for learners to master. Traditional classroom methods may not sufficiently engage students or expose them to authentic language use. In recent years, educators have explored innovative approaches to improve listening skills, with music emerging as a promising tool. This article investigates how music can support the development of English listening skills, offering both theoretical justification and practical implications for language instruction.

Research into alternative approaches has emphasized the need for affective and authentic methods that align with learners' interests. Music, as a culturally rich and emotionally engaging medium, has increasingly gained attention in second language acquisition (SLA) pedagogy. This study builds on such frameworks and uses real data from Vietnamese university students to evaluate music's role in enhancing listening ability.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of input in language acquisition has been well-documented by Krashen (1985), who emphasized the importance of comprehensible input in language learning.

Music, especially songs with lyrics, provides authentic, repetitive, and engaging input that can enhance comprehension. According to Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011), music supports phonological memory, prosodic awareness, and the decoding of connected speech. Previous studies (e.g., Ludke, Ferreira & Overy, 2014; Medina, 1993) have shown that learners exposed to musical activities demonstrate improved listening comprehension and vocabulary retention. Moreover, music reduces affective filters such as anxiety, which can hinder language learning (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, Schon et al. (2008) found that melody enhances memory for verbal material, making music a particularly suitable medium for language instruction. The combination of rhythm, repetition, and melody in songs reinforces linguistic patterns and makes them more memorable for learners.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Participants

The study involved 123 English language students at the University of Transport and Communications, Ho Chi Minh City campus. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group that received music-integrated listening instruction and a control group that followed a traditional curriculum.

### 3.2 Materials

Materials included a curated playlist of English-language songs representing various genres and levels of linguistic complexity. Lyrics were provided for guided listening, with accompanying comprehension and vocabulary exercises. Songs were selected based on clarity of pronunciation, relevance to common vocabulary themes, and student interest as determined by a preliminary needs analysis.

### 3.3 Procedure

Over eight weeks, the experimental group engaged in weekly sessions where music was used to teach listening strategies. Activities included:

- Gap-filling lyrics
- Identifying and interpreting idiomatic expressions
- Analyzing tone and emotion
- Context-based meaning inference

Both pre- and post-tests were administered to measure improvement in listening comprehension, with additional qualitative feedback gathered through student surveys and reflective journals.

## 4. RESULTS

Quantitative data revealed that the experimental group showed a 22% average improvement in listening comprehension scores compared to an 11% improvement in the control group. The improvement was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, vocabulary acquisition was higher among students exposed to music-based instruction. Qualitative data from learner surveys indicated strong positive attitudes toward the use of music. Among the 123 participants, 91% reported that songs made them feel more motivated to study English. Over 80% agreed that repeated exposure to song lyrics improved their word recognition and retention. Comments from reflective journals highlighted music's role in making lessons more enjoyable and less stressful.

Some common themes included:

- Increased confidence in listening tasks
- Greater exposure to natural speech patterns
- Enjoyment and emotional engagement

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results suggest that music is not only effective for listening comprehension but also for broader linguistic and affective development. Music facilitates improved prosodic and phonemic awareness—critical for decoding spoken English—by immersing students in natural language rhythm and intonation. In the context of Vietnamese learners, cultural familiarity with karaoke and music consumption may make this method particularly effective. The study aligns with socio-cultural learning

theories, emphasizing the role of meaningful context and learner identity in SLA. While the experimental design and participant engagement helped produce clear results, it is also evident that success depends on thoughtful integration of music into structured lesson plans. Random or passive listening may not yield the same benefits as guided, pedagogically informed activities.

## 6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Educators are encouraged to integrate music into their listening curriculum in the following ways:

- **Curriculum alignment:** Ensure that songs selected match the learners' proficiency level and thematic curriculum goals.
- **Interactive tasks:** Use lyric-based tasks that require active learner participation, such as prediction, summarization, and peer teaching.
- **Multi-skill development:** Integrate listening with speaking, writing, and cultural discussion to build well-rounded competence.
- **Technology integration:** Utilize multimedia tools (e.g., YouTube, lyric websites, language apps) to enhance access and interactivity.

These strategies create a dynamic classroom atmosphere and promote a learner-centered approach to language acquisition.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused on intermediate learners at a single university; therefore, generalizability to other contexts may be limited. Additionally, while short-term gains in comprehension and vocabulary were clear, long-term retention and impact on overall fluency require further longitudinal research. Future studies could explore:

- Effects of music on beginner or advanced learners
- The impact of different genres (e.g., pop, rap, ballads) on language outcomes
- Comparative studies between music and other multimodal inputs (e.g., films, podcasts)
- Use of student-composed or culturally adapted songs for deeper engagement

## 8. CONCLUSION

Music offers a dynamic and enjoyable pathway for improving English listening skills. By combining linguistic input with emotional and cognitive engagement, music-based instruction enhances comprehension and fosters a more holistic language learning experience. For students at the University of Transport and Communications in Ho Chi Minh City, music provided not just a tool for learning but a medium of connection and self-expression, affirming its potential in modern language education.

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