

ENHANCING LISTENING SKILLS BY INCORPORATING ENGLISH SONGS INTO LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL STUDENTS AT YANGON IN MYANMAR

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Abstract

English listening skills are essential for effective language learning, yet many English language learners continue to experience difficulties in comprehending spoken English. Previous studies have reported the positive effects of English songs on language learning; however, limited research has examined their role in enhancing listening skills among students in language schools in Myanmar. Furthermore, few studies have explored both students' perceptions of song-based learning and teachers' perspectives on addressing listening difficulties. This study aimed to (1) examine the extent to which English songs enhance students' listening skills and (2) identify possible solutions to common listening difficulties encountered by English language learners. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The participants consisted of 100 students selected through random sampling and five teachers selected through purposive sampling from an English language school in Yangon, Myanmar. Data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students demonstrated positive perceptions of the use of English songs as a tool for improving listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, and vocabulary acquisition. Nevertheless, learners reported several challenges, particularly in understanding rapid speech and unfamiliar vocabulary. Furthermore, the qualitative findings indicated that although English songs contribute positively to listening development, other authentic materials, such as movies and audio recordings, may offer more practical exposure to real-life language use. The study concludes that English songs can serve as an effective supplementary resource for enhancing students' listening skills. However, their effectiveness can be maximized when they are combined with other authentic listening materials. The findings provide valuable pedagogical implications for English language teachers seeking to design engaging and effective listening activities.

Keywords: Listening Skills, English Songs, Listening Comprehension, Language Learning, ESL Learners

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, effective communication has become essential for social, educational, professional, and intercultural interaction. Language serves as one of the principal means through which people exchange information, express ideas, and establish relationships. Although thousands of languages are spoken worldwide, English has acquired a particularly prominent position as a language of international communication. More than 7,000 languages are currently spoken around the world, reflecting considerable linguistic diversity; however, the increasing use of English across national and linguistic boundaries has established it as an important lingua franca in many international contexts (Skirgård & Greenhill, 2023). English is therefore widely used in education, business, science, technology, tourism, and communication among people who do not share the same first language. The importance of language to human development and social cooperation has been discussed from historical and cognitive perspectives. Harari (2014) argues that the development of human language and cognitive abilities played an important role in enabling human beings to cooperate, communicate information, and construct complex societies. In the contemporary world, this communicative function has become increasingly significant because globalization requires individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact with one another. English consequently functions not only as a language of native speakers but also as a common means of communication among people who use it as a second or foreign language. The global position of English has also increased the importance of English language teaching and learning. English is taught as a second or foreign language in educational institutions in many countries, including countries where English is not the first language. In Thailand and other EFL contexts, learners study English primarily to participate in academic, professional, and international communication. The growing importance of English therefore places considerable demands on language learners to develop the ability to understand and use English effectively. This requires attention to the four major language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—with listening being particularly important because oral communication depends fundamentally on the ability to understand spoken language. Listening is an essential component of successful communication because it enables learners to receive, interpret, and respond to spoken messages. A learner may possess knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar but still experience difficulties in communication if they cannot understand spoken English. Listening comprehension is particularly challenging for EFL learners because spoken language may involve unfamiliar vocabulary, different accents, reduced or connected speech, and relatively rapid delivery. Consequently, opportunities for learners to receive meaningful and comprehensible listening input are important for developing their overall communicative competence.

The importance of providing appropriate learning experiences is also supported by research concerning the relationship between learning and cognitive processes. Thadphoothon (2019) discusses the implications of brain research for English language teaching and emphasizes the relevance of understanding how learners process and acquire language. Similarly, motivation is an important factor in foreign language learning because learners' willingness and engagement can influence their participation in learning activities (Abdurakhimova, 2020). These perspectives suggest that effective language instruction should not focus exclusively on linguistic knowledge but should also consider learners' cognitive, emotional, and motivational engagement. Despite the importance of listening, it can be one of the more difficult skills for EFL learners to develop. Conventional English instruction may rely heavily on textbooks, written exercises, and controlled classroom dialogues, which may provide limited exposure to naturally occurring spoken English. Learners consequently need additional opportunities to encounter English in meaningful and engaging forms. One possible approach is the integration of authentic or semi-authentic materials, including music and English songs, into language-learning activities. Music has long been associated with human communication, emotion, culture, and cognition. Orange Hippo (2022) discusses the broad relationship between music and human experience, suggesting that music extends beyond entertainment and can influence cognitive and emotional processes. The relationship between music and language is particularly relevant to language education because songs combine linguistic input with rhythm, melody, repetition, and meaningful contexts. These characteristics can create opportunities for learners to listen to English repeatedly while maintaining their attention and interest.

The pedagogical potential of songs in English language learning has been examined in previous research. Merina (2022) for example, found that the use of English songs could support the development of students' listening, writing, and speaking skills. More broadly, Kumar et al. (2022) reviewed the use of music and songs in English as a foreign language contexts and reported that songs can provide useful opportunities for language practice, including listening practice, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and repeated exposure to linguistic forms. The authors also highlighted the potential of songs to create a more enjoyable and less anxiety-provoking learning environment for language learners. Songs may therefore provide several characteristics that are relevant to listening development. Their repeated linguistic patterns can expose learners to vocabulary and grammatical structures, while rhythm and melody may help maintain learners' attention. In addition, listening to songs can expose learners to pronunciation, stress, connected speech, and different patterns of spoken English. Rather than treating music merely as entertainment, teachers can incorporate songs into structured listening activities in which learners identify words, predict meaning, complete lyrics, recognize pronunciation features, and interpret the overall message. Such activities can transform songs into supplementary learning materials that

support active listening. Nevertheless, the use of English songs in language classrooms should be considered critically. Songs vary in vocabulary, pronunciation, speed, accent, grammatical complexity, and cultural content. Some songs may therefore be difficult for learners, particularly those with limited English proficiency. In addition, learners may focus primarily on the melody rather than the linguistic content unless teachers provide appropriate pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. The effectiveness of songs consequently depends not simply on their presence in the classroom but also on how they are selected and pedagogically integrated into the learning process. Although previous studies have reported positive relationships between songs and language learning, further investigation is needed into how English songs can specifically support listening development among learners in particular EFL contexts. The existing literature also indicates that learners may encounter difficulties when listening to English because of unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech, pronunciation features, and differences between classroom English and naturally occurring spoken English. These difficulties are particularly relevant in contexts where learners have limited opportunities to communicate with native or highly proficient English speakers outside the classroom. Against this background, the present study focuses on the use of English songs to enhance the listening skills of English language school students in Yangon, Myanmar. The study investigates the extent to which English songs can contribute to learners' listening development and examines the listening difficulties that learners encounter. It also considers possible pedagogical approaches for addressing these difficulties through the use of songs and other appropriate listening activities. By examining English songs as a supplementary resource for listening instruction, the study seeks to contribute both theoretical and practical insights into the teaching and learning of English in an EFL context.

The study is particularly significant because effective listening is fundamental to meaningful communication, while English songs provide learners with an accessible form of repeated and engaging exposure to spoken English. Understanding how songs can be incorporated effectively into listening instruction may assist English teachers in developing more engaging classroom practices and provide learners with additional opportunities to improve their listening comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation awareness, and overall confidence in using English

Research Objectives

1. To examine how English songs enhance listening skills.
2. To identify solutions to listening difficulties through the use of English songs.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the role of English songs in enhancing listening skills among students at an English language school in Yangon, Myanmar. The mixed-methods design was selected because it enabled the researcher to obtain both numerical data on students' perceptions and in-depth qualitative insights from teachers, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The population consisted of 300 students and 30 teachers. A sample of 100 students was selected through simple random sampling to ensure that every student had an equal opportunity to participate, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. In addition, five teachers were selected through purposive sampling because they possessed relevant teaching experience and were directly involved in developing students' English listening skills.

Two research instruments were employed for data collection: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered to the student participants and consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, while the second section contained Likert-scale items measuring students' perceptions of the use of English songs, listening difficulties, learning engagement, and perceived improvement in listening skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected teachers using open-ended questions designed to explore their experiences, instructional practices, perceptions of students' listening challenges, and opinions regarding the effectiveness of English songs in language learning.

To ensure the quality of the research instruments, the questionnaire and interview questions were reviewed by three experts in English language teaching and educational research to establish content validity. Their recommendations were incorporated before the instruments were administered. In addition, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of students who were not included in the main study to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the items. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Data were collected after obtaining permission from the school administration and informed consent from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were maintained throughout the research process, and the collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The qualitative data collected through the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the research

objectives. The findings from both datasets were integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the role of English songs in enhancing students' listening skills.

Results

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, and educational background. A total of 100 students participated in the study.

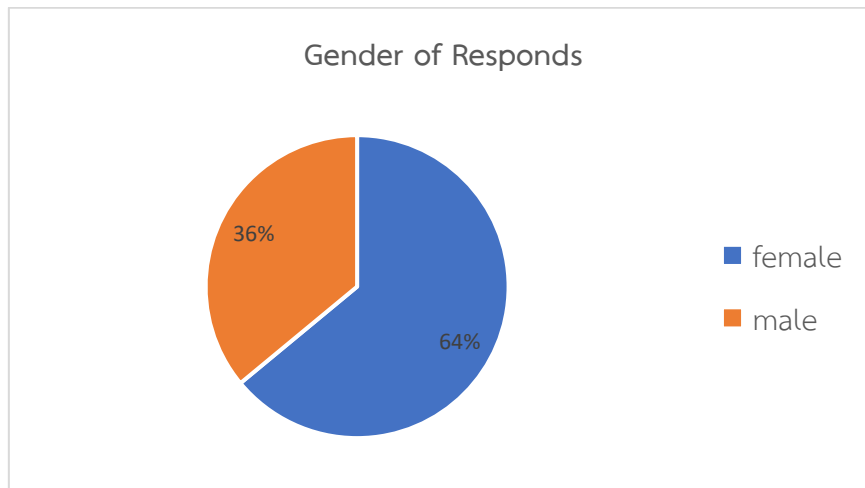


Figure 1: Gender of Responds

As illustrated in Figure 1, the respondents consisted of 64 female students (64%) and 36 male students (36%). The data indicate that female participants constituted the majority of the sample.

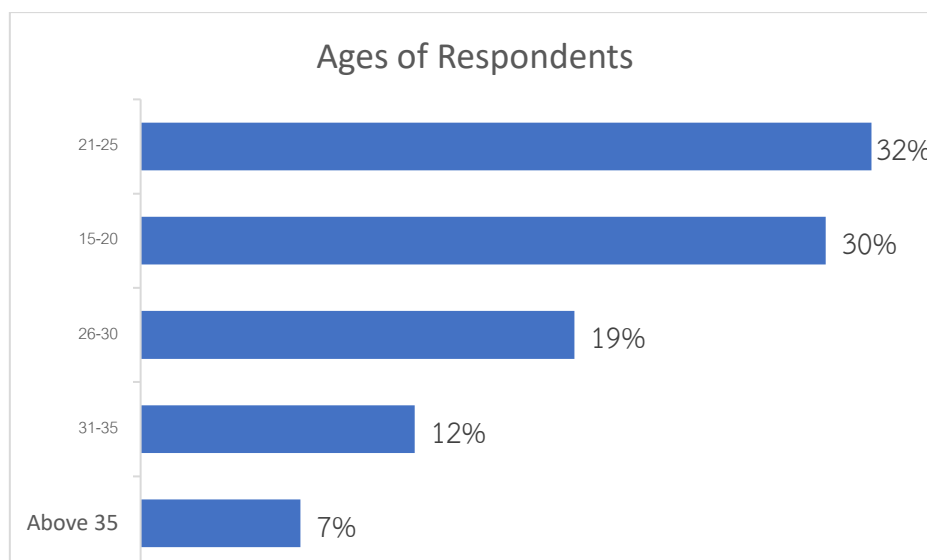


Figure 2: Ages of Respondents

Figure 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. the largest group was aged 21–25 years (32%), followed by those aged 15–20 years (30%), 26–30 years (19%), 31–35

years (12%), and above 35 years (7%). These findings suggest that the majority of respondents were young adults.

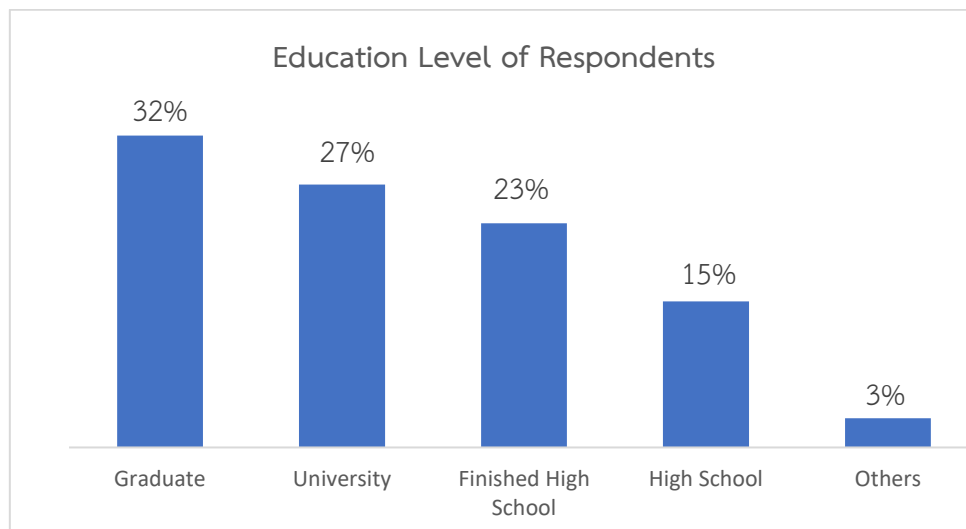


Figure 3: Education Level of Respondents

As shown in Figure 3, the respondents represented diverse educational backgrounds. graduates constituted the largest proportion of respondents (32%), followed by university students (27%), participants who had completed high school (23%), current high school students (15%), and respondents from other backgrounds (3%). The results indicate that most respondents possessed at least a university-level educational background.

Table 1 Students' Attitude of Ways of Enhancing English Listening Skills

Question	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. English songs can be used in language learning process especially, to promote listening comprehension.	3.85	0.96	High
2. I can improve English usage when I listen to English songs.	3.75	0.96	
3. I can improve stressed and unstressed syllables awareness, because I used to listen to English songs.	3.49	1.10	

The findings related to Objective 1 indicate that respondents generally held positive perceptions regarding the role of English songs in enhancing listening skills.

Item 1, which examined whether English songs can promote listening comprehension, obtained a mean score of 3.85 (S.D. = 0.96), indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. This result suggests that most participants perceived English songs as an effective tool for improving listening comprehension.

Similarly, Item 2, which assessed whether English songs can promote the use of English, recorded a mean score of 3.75 (S.D. = 0.96), also reflecting a high level of agreement.

The finding indicates that respondents believed that listening to English songs encourages greater engagement with the English language.

Item 3, investigated whether English songs can improve learners' awareness of stressed and unstressed syllables. The item achieved a mean score of 3.49 (S.D. = 1.10), indicating a moderate to high level of agreement. This finding suggests that respondents generally perceived English songs as helpful in developing pronunciation awareness, particularly with regard to stress patterns in spoken English.

Overall, the results demonstrate that respondents viewed English songs positively as a means of enhancing listening skills. The relatively high mean scores across all items suggest that English songs contribute to the improvement of listening comprehension, language use, and pronunciation awareness among English language learners.

Table 2 Students' Attitude of Finding the Solutions to Listening Problems Component I: Problems of Listening Skills

Question	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. I find it challenging when I listen to native speakers speak too fast.	3.97	1.01	High
2. I find it difficult when I listen to unfamiliar words and phrases.	3.84	0.92	
3. I find it difficult when I listen to any speaker speaks too softly.	3.41	1.18	

The findings related to Component 1 of Objective 2, reveal that respondents experienced several challenges in listening comprehension. Item 1 obtained a mean score of 3.97 (S.D. = 1.01), indicating a high level of agreement. This finding suggests that many students experienced difficulty understanding native speakers who speak at a rapid pace. The result highlights speech rate as a significant factor affecting listening comprehension.

Item 2, recorded a mean score of 3.84 (S.D. = 0.92), also indicating a high level of agreement. This result implies that respondents frequently encountered difficulties when listening to unfamiliar words and phrases. The finding suggests that limited vocabulary knowledge may hinder learners' ability to comprehend spoken English effectively.

Similarly, Item 3 achieved a mean score of 3.41 (S.D. = 1.18), indicating a moderate to high level of agreement. This finding suggests that students experienced challenges when listening to speakers who spoke too softly, which may have reduced the clarity of the spoken message and affected comprehension.

Overall, the results indicate that respondents encountered considerable listening difficulties, particularly in understanding fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and softly spoken language. These findings suggest that speech rate, vocabulary familiarity, and speech clarity are important factors influencing learners' listening comprehension.

Table 3 Students' Attitude of Finding the Solutions to Listening Problems Component II: Solutions to Listening Problems

Question	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. I can overcome listening problems by watching movies or TV shows.	3.89	0.95	High
2. I can overcome challenges of fast speed by paying attention to the speech.	3.79	1.01	
3. I can overcome listening problems caused by exclusive terms by estimating the contexts.	3.37	0.94	

The findings related to Component 2 of Objective 2 indicate that respondents identified several effective strategies for overcoming listening difficulties.

Item 1 obtained a mean score of 3.89 (S.D. = 0.95), indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. This finding suggests that participants generally perceived the strategy presented in this item as an effective means of improving listening comprehension and addressing listening-related challenges.

Similarly, Item 2 recorded a mean score of 3.79 (S.D. = 1.01), also reflecting a high level of agreement. The result implies that respondents viewed this strategy as beneficial in helping learners overcome difficulties encountered during listening activities.

In contrast, Item 3 achieved a mean score of 3.37 (S.D. = 0.94), indicating a moderate level of agreement. Although respondents generally acknowledged the usefulness of this strategy, it was perceived as less effective compared with the strategies represented in Items 1 and 2.

Overall, the findings indicate that respondents recognized several practical strategies for addressing listening difficulties. The relatively high mean scores suggest that these approaches may contribute positively to improving listening comprehension and facilitating more effective language learning.

Table 4 Interview Teacher Profile

Teacher No	Name	Gender	Age	Qualification	Graduate University	Teaching Experience
T.no 1	U Aung Myo Min	Male	40	M.Ed	YOUE	8
T.no 2	U aung Kyaw Zaw	Male	38	M.Ed	MEDC	6
T.no 3	Ma May Thu Win	Female	39	M.Ed	YOUE	5
T.no 4	Ma Su Hnin Wai	Female	37	M.Ed	SOUE	4
T.no 5	Ant min Wai	Male	35	B.A (ENG)	YUFL	4

YOUE= Yangon University of Education MEDC=Mandalay Education Degree College

SUOE=Sagaing University of Education YUFL=University of Foreign Language (Yangon)

Qualitative Findings from Teacher Interviews

The qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with five English language teachers. Among the participants, three were male and two were female, aged between 35 and 40 years. Four teachers held a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree, while one held a Bachelor of Arts in English (B.A. English). All participants had at least four years of teaching experience.

The teachers emphasized the importance of regular exposure to authentic listening materials, including songs, stories, audio-books, movies, and other audio resources. They highlighted that extensive listening practice, awareness of pronunciation features such as stress and linking sounds, and the use of English as a medium of instruction can contribute to the development of listening skills.

Regarding listening difficulties, the participants identified limited exposure to English-speaking environments, unfamiliar vocabulary, and insufficient listening practice as major challenges. They suggested creating more opportunities for learners to engage with authentic spoken English and encouraging continuous listening practice both inside and outside the classroom.

Concerning the use of English songs, the teachers generally viewed songs as a valuable supplementary learning resource. They believed that songs can improve pronunciation awareness, listening comprehension, and learner motivation. However, several participants noted that songs should not be used as the sole listening resource because they may not always reflect authentic conversational English. Therefore, teachers recommended combining songs with other authentic materials, such as movies, podcasts, and real-life communication activities, to achieve more effective listening development.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English songs can positively contribute to the development of listening skills among English language learners. Students generally agreed that songs helped improve listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, and the use of English. These findings are consistent with (Ur, 1984) who emphasized the importance of meaningful language input in language learning. The positive impact of songs may be attributed to their ability to provide authentic language exposure in an enjoyable and engaging manner.

The study also revealed that learners experienced several listening difficulties, particularly when listening to rapid speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, different accents, and authentic conversations. These findings support the results of (Alzamil, 2021) who reported that learners often struggle to comprehend spoken English due to linguistic and contextual challenges. Similarly, difficulties in understanding specialized vocabulary and grammatical structures were identified as barriers to effective listening comprehension.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings suggested that listening difficulties can be reduced through increased exposure to authentic listening materials, such as movies, television programs, audiobooks, podcasts, and online videos. This finding is consistent with (Kokroko & Dumenyah, 2020) who highlighted the importance of providing learners with sufficient opportunities to engage with authentic language input.

Furthermore, the interview findings indicated that limited exposure to English-speaking environments and insufficient listening practice were major obstacles to listening development. The teachers emphasized the importance of extensive listening practice, vocabulary development, and regular interaction with authentic spoken English. These findings support (Merina, 2022) who found that learners often receive inadequate listening practice in formal educational settings.

Overall, the findings suggest that English songs can serve as an effective supplementary resource for enhancing listening skills. However, teachers generally recommended combining songs with other authentic listening materials, particularly movies and real-life communication activities, to provide learners with more comprehensive language exposure. Therefore, the integration of English songs with diverse listening resources may offer a more effective approach to developing listening competence among English language learners.

Body of knowledge

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of English language learning by proposing a model of song-assisted listening development among English language learners. The findings suggests that English songs function as authentic linguistic input that enhances listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, and learner engagement. Increased engagement encourages more frequent exposure to English, which in turn reinforces listening development and creates a continuous cycle of language improvement.

The study also contributes practical knowledge by identifying the major barriers to effective listening, including unfamiliar vocabulary, diverse English accents, rapid speech, and limited exposure to authentic language. Based on these findings, the study proposes an integrated instructional model in which English songs are combined with other authentic listening materials such as podcasts, videos, conversations and audiovisual media. This integrated approach enables learners to overcome listening challenges, strengthen comprehension strategies, and improve overall listening proficiency. The synthesis of these findings demonstrates the effective listening development is achieved through the interaction of authentic input, learner engagement, strategic instructional support, and regular listening practice.

The model synthesizes the study's findings into a single framework, illustrating that English-songs act as an authentic learning resource that increases engagement, promotes regular listening practice, develops key listening sub-skills, and ultimately improves listening proficiency. Integrating songs with other authentic listening materials further addresses common listening difficulties and strengthens the effectiveness of listening instruction. This type of synthesized model is appropriate for inclusion the Body of Knowledge, Discussion, or Conclusion chapter of a master's thesis

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the role of English songs in enhancing listening skills among students at an English language school in Yangon, Myanmar. The findings revealed that students generally held positive attitudes toward the use of English songs for improving listening comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and pronunciation awareness.

The study also found that learners experienced difficulties related to rapid speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, different accents, and limited exposure to English-speaking environments. Both quantitative and qualitative findings suggested that these challenges can be reduced through regular exposure to authentic listening materials and continuous listening practice.

In conclusion, English songs can be an effective supplementary resource for improving listening skills when combined with other authentic learning materials and listening activities. Based on the findings of the study, English language teachers are encouraged to incorporate English songs into listening activities to increase learners' motivation and listening practice. However, songs should be used alongside other authentic materials such as movies, podcasts, and audiobooks.

Students should engage in regular listening practice and expose themselves to a variety of English-language resources to improve their listening comprehension and familiarity with different accents and vocabulary.

This study was limited to one English language school in Yangon, Myanmar, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the study focused primarily on listening skills and did not examine the impact of English songs on other aspects of language learning.

Future researchers may explore the effects of English songs on other language skills, such as speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation.

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