



Arab EFL students' vocabulary enrichment through listening to songs from the English language

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Abstract

The current research tries to investigate the influence of listening to songs in English enhances incidental vocabulary acquisition among EFL Arab students who live in Israel. These students are from proficiency level and they live in Israel. The study attempts to investigate the effect from the student's perspective. The present study attempted to answer the following questions:

Is there a significant effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition?

What are other potential benefits of listening to songs in English?

The study was conducted with 31 students in 10th grade (in the cities of Nazareth and Sakhnin, and in the villages of Reine and Kfar-Kana) northern district of Israel. The participants consisted of both male and female students. The researchers used two questionnaires as the research instruments to collect the data. The findings of this study showed that songs in English motivate vocabulary acquisition among EFL Arab students who live in Israel and help develop their English language skills and improve their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. In addition, the researchers believe this study could motivate Arab EFL teachers to use songs in English in the classroom to develop students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, English as a foreign language, efl, songs, language skills

Introduction

In the study of foreign languages, vocabulary is considered one of the most important language elements. The development of language skills and other language elements will not be possible without a good command of vocabulary (Yohanna, 2016) ^[59]. It is referred to as the foundation of language skills, since Alqahtani (2015 in Yohanna, 2016) ^[59] pointed out that vocabulary, in addition to being the main part of language learning, is also one of the most important language elements.

English has gained increasing importance worldwide and in Israel in particular. Therefore, Arab parents and educators have begun to show concern about their children's low level of English, and have begun to seek solutions to this problem (Amara and Marai, 2002) ^[3]. The English language is a foreign language for many Arab students in Israel. It is the third language that they study, as opposed to Hebrew, the second language, which is related linguistically to Arabic with similar phonology and morphology, as well as many cognate words. Few adults in the Arab community speak English, and Arab schools do not have a very high proportion of native or near-native-speaking English teachers. Due to all these factors, Arab students find it more difficult to learn English (Murad, 2009) ^[36].

Researchers for acquiring vocabulary have identified two methods. Among these methods are (a) deliberate or intentional vocabulary learning, and (b) incidental vocabulary acquisition (Loewen, 2014) ^[28]. Due to a large number of vocabulary items in languages, it is unrealistic to teach and learn every single word. Therefore, a substantial amount of vocabulary learning is accomplished through incidental teaching (Nation, 2011) ^[40]. Considering the significance of incidental learning to the acquisition of L2 vocabulary, researchers have focused considerable attention on this method in recent decades, particularly incidental

learning through reading (Horst, 2005; Webb, 2007) ^[56], and listening (Van Zeeland and Schmitt, 2012) ^[20, 55].

Recent research has investigated incidental vocabulary learning via television and movies, in an effort to find alternative sources of language input that can be used by learners around the globe (Rodgers, 2013) ^[46]. In spite of this, there is very little research focusing on the use of music, or more specifically L2 songs, as a form of input to facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Maneshi, 2017) ^[30].

Therefore, in this study, the researchers would like to investigate Arab students' perception on incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition through listening to songs.

The aim of the study is to answer questions related to the influence of songs in English on EFL Arab Students incidental vocabulary acquisition. These students are from proficiency level and they live in Israel. The study attempts to investigate the effect from the students' perspective.

The following terms have the associated meanings in the study.

Definition of terms

Incidental Learning

The concept of incidental learning in vocabulary research generally refers to the acquisition of words that seem to occur naturally in daily life, as opposed to intentional vocabulary learning, which refers to learning as the result of deliberate effort and study (Sok, 2014) ^[52]. Word learning is not the primary activity of incidental vocabulary learning (Huckin & Coady, 1999) ^[21]. Hence, the words "incidental vocabulary acquisition" are often used to describe the acquisition of new words as a "by-product" (Huckin & Coady, 1999) ^[21], and as the unplanned and spontaneous "picking up" (Rott, 1997) ^[47] of new words during an activity.

Secondary Stage

It is the third schooling stage in Israel, which begins by the beginning of tenth grade and ends by the end of twelfth grade (Murad, 2009)^[36]. It is also called proficiency level.

Songs

Hornby (1995)^[19] defines a song as a piece of music with lyrics that is sung. According to Guerra (2015)^[14], a song is an artistic composition consisting of lyrics and music intended to express a feeling or evoke an emotion.

Review of related literature

The chapter begins with a definition of English as a foreign language (EFL) and reviews the differences between EFL and English as a second language (ESL). The second section defines the meaning of songs and their function. The third section presents an explanation of vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition and incidental vocabulary acquisition. The last section reviews the effect of songs on incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition. Review of related literature will help answer the research question:

- Is there a significant effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition?
- What are other potential benefits of listening to songs in English?

English as a foreign language (EFL)

The term EFL refers to English as a Foreign Language. However, some researchers are only familiar with research on English as a second language (ESL), and even equate ESL with English as a foreign language (EFL) without distinction (Peng, 2019)^[44]. It is important to distinguish between a "foreign language" and a "second language". In *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, Stern (1983)^[53] explains how a foreign language differs from a second language in terms of language functions, learning purposes, language environment, and instructional methods. According to him, a foreign language is one that is spoken outside the country. Learning a foreign language is beneficial for tourism, communicating with native speakers, reading foreign journals, etc. In contrast, a Second Language functions similarly to a mother tongue.

Ping (2019) distinguished "foreign language" from "second language" based on language environment, language input, and affective factors that influence the learning process. Therefore, EFL refers to learning English in non-English speaking countries, whereas ESL refers to English as a second language, which has the same or even higher status than mother tongue.

Iwai (2011)^[23] defines EFL as learning English in a non-English speaking country. (For example, Arab students learning English in Israel are EFL learners). As for ESL, it refers to those who learn English in countries where English is the official language and is used as a communication tool. (For example, Hispanic people learning English are referred to as ESL learners (Peng, 2019)^[44]).

Definition of song

Almutairi and Shukri (2016)^[2] describe songs as singing works of art that may be performed without instrumental accompaniments. Songs may also be described as relatively short piece of music with lyrics for the human voice (Kayyis, 2015)^[24]. However, songs are different from

scientific and formal texts as they contain rhymes and are expressed in an informal manner. As a culturally relevant educational resource, songs captivate and engage learners, and because they are less intimidating, they can also be used as classroom activities (Yunus and Razak, 2016).

There are two meanings of singing based on Middleton (1990)^[33, 60] and Kusnierek (2016). Middleton (1990)^[33] defines a song as a short musical arrangement containing words or lyrics produced by human voices. The music and tuning of the song make listening to the lyrics more enjoyable (Bsharat, 2021)^[4]. Kusnierek (2016), however, pointed out that a song is more than just a combination of lyrics and music. A song also conveys a message that contains meaning. The lyrics of a song contain details about the language the singer uses. The data is associated with the message the singer wishes to convey. According to Bsharat (2021)^[4], the lyrics and music used in an album influence the listener's interpretation of the meaning of the song.

Lo and Li (1998)^[27] claim that "songs are an indispensable tool for developing students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with a variety of other language skills, such as sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, adjectives, and adverbs." Moreover, teaching English to young learners with songs has many advantages. One of those benefits is that the students will feel comfortable and relaxed because of the good atmosphere, which will enhance their degree of proficiency (Weda, 2009 in Rahmah, 2015)^[45]. According to Lo and Li (1998)^[27] in the same field of English teaching, songs are also useful in promoting English, as they note that music stimulates students' interest and increases their involvement.

Based on the explanation above, there are various functions of songs from a linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social, and cultural point of view. As well as being used for fun, it is also used in education, such as in teaching English to students and improving their vocabulary. It can also be considered that songs with simple text would help the students develop their English proficiency, especially with regard to vocabulary (Rahmah, 2015)^[45].

Definition of vocabulary

One of the components of language learning is vocabulary (Suciati, 2021)^[54]. As described by (Harmer, 2001)^[15] who says that without grammar, very little can be said but without vocabulary, nothing can be said. Hammer argues that vocabulary is the most important element of a language and cannot be separated. According to several experts, there are several definitions of vocabulary (Suciati, 2021)^[54].

Hatch (1995)^[17] describes vocabulary as "a list or collection of words for a particular language or a list or collection of words that are likely to be used by speakers of that language". (Suciati, 2021)^[54] have suggested that vocabulary refers to words that a person needs to know to communicate effectively: words for speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words for listening (receptive vocabulary).

Languages serve as a tool for communication and as a way to understand each other (Suciati, 2021)^[54]. Language is defined as "a system of communicating ideas and information, either orally, in writing, or visually. Besides grammar and pronunciation, vocabulary is a major component of language learning

Vocabulary acquisition

When discussing the subject of vocabulary acquisition, Cook (1996) ^[6] emphasizes the importance of learning how a word is used in context, not just how it is defined in a dictionary, but how it relates to all the other words in the language, and how when it is used in sentences. Learning the vocabulary of a Foreign Language (FL) is far more complicated than learning a list of words or memorizing them. Although this is a common way of learning language, it is not always the most effective way of acquiring the language as vocabulary is "the material to put in the patterns" that are provided by grammar. Many words in English that not necessarily have an equivalent word in another language. In addition, they do not have the same definition as the word in English (Cook, 1996) ^[6]. The best way to learn vocabulary is to use it in context (Gee, 2004; Saville-Troike, 2012) ^[13, 49].

As Newton, (2013) ^[41] suggests, vocabulary learning, as a part of the incidental acquisition of English, benefited from a communication task in which students encountered unfamiliar words and determined their meanings without the benefit of external sources of information. According to Ehsanzadeh (2012) ^[8], incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading increased both breadth and depth of lexical knowledge. Based on these two studies, incidental vocabulary acquisition may benefit from both consulting glossaries and developing definitions for words (Pecorari, 2015) ^[43].

The phonology of a language is another component of incidental language learning that receives considerable attention from researchers. For example, Cook (1996) ^[6], Falk, et.al. (2014) ^[9], Fonseca-Mora *et al.* (2011) ^[10], Legg (2009). In order to learn a language, a learner must be able to recognize words that have been created by others within a community as well as recognize different accents. In upper-secondary school, students should be able to understand different dialects. The songs are sung by musicians from almost every language group, reflecting both lexical and phonological characteristics (Falk, et.al 2014) ^[9].

Incidental vocabulary acquisition

In incidental vocabulary, words are learned as a result of an activity that was not deliberately designed for that purpose (Gass, 1999; Hulstijn, 2001; Loewen, 2015) ^[12, 22, 29]. Research indicates that it is responsible for most first language (L1) vocabulary growth (Nation, 2001; Webb & Nation, 2017) ^[38, 57]. When learning a second language (L2) in a non-English speaking community where individuals are not naturally exposed to large quantities of L2 input, deliberate teaching and learning of the L2 may account for a majority of L2 vocabulary acquisition (Laufer, 2003) ^[26]. Nation (2006) ^[39] investigated the amount of vocabulary required to understand different types of English discourse. According to him, learners should be familiar with the 6,000 to 7,000 most frequent word families to comprehend spoken discourse and the 8,000 to 9,000 most frequent word families to comprehend written discourse. In recent studies, it has been suggested that knowledge of the 3,000 most frequent word families is sufficient for understanding spoken discourse (Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Webb & Rodgers, 2009) ^[55, 58]. Nevertheless, research has shown that EFL learners are unable to learn the most frequent 3,000 words; much less, the most frequent 8,000 to 9,000 words (Webb & Chang, 2012 in Maneshi, 2017) ^[30]. Therefore,

finding new ways to enhance L2 vocabulary growth may be beneficial. The ability to learn vocabulary incidentally through interaction with large amounts of L2 input in different types of spoken and written discourse has the greatest potential for promoting L2 vocabulary development (Webb & Nation, 2017) ^[57].

Another source of language input is L2 songs (Maneshi, 2017) ^[30]. Songs have the potential to be a valuable resource for vocabulary learning for several reasons. First, they can provide large quantities of language input. In a sub-study of the project Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE), Lindgren & Munoz (2013) examined different sources of exposure to foreign languages outside the classroom. Among the sources of FL input (Maneshi, 2017) ^[30] were the internet, watching films with or without subtitles, playing video games, reading and speaking in FL, and listening to music in FL.

According to a study that investigated repeated listening to a story, learners showed some knowledge of the target vocabulary items after one exposure. Nevertheless, when exposed to the story more frequently, their understanding of the target vocabulary items deepened, as well as their ability to retell the story accurately (Palmer and Killey, 1992) ^[42]. In another study, Horst & Meara (2005) ^[20] found that knowledge of vocabulary items increased with repeated exposure to a single text. As a result, repeated listening to songs may result in increased vocabulary acquisition.

Songs in FL vocabulary acquisition

Murphey's (1990) ^[37] "The discourse of pop songs" (as cited in Hirata, 2018) ^[18] is one of the early examples of research on songs in FL vocabulary acquisition. He found that, in terms of content and lexicon, the lyrics of songs were composed of very short texts as compared to lyrics from other genres. As a result, he concluded that songs were a useful vocabulary pedagogical tool (Hirata, 2018) ^[18]. Since then, there have been few studies conducted on songs in FL, and most of them have examined songs as language teaching tools, namely songs that aid in recall and retention of vocabulary. Songs that support vocabulary learning and the vocabulary size necessary for understanding songs and its implications for teaching (Ozturk, 2017) (as cited in Hirata, 2018) ^[18].

Songs and language abilities

Songs can improve speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, according to Saricoban and Metin (2000) ^[48]. Using songs to teach reading is consistent with the nature and purpose of language, according to Harp (1988) ^[16], and provides readers with satisfying meanings. It is possible for music to become quite personal and allow children to express their individual feelings through music. Researchers have shown that songs can help children improve their pronunciation levels as well (Gan & Chong, 1998) ^[11]. Songs improve students' vocabulary and English learning abilities, as well as their habit of learning the English language more enthusiastically (Alefshat, 2019) ^[1]. Music and songs generally have a positive impact on English as a Foreign Language learning. Studies have shown that music and songs facilitate language learning (Schön *et al.*, 2008; Mashayekh and Hashemi, 2011) ^[31, 50]. Because of their motivational characteristics, they facilitate language acquisition (Coyle and Gracia, 2014) ^[7] and vocabulary and language acquisition (Chou, 2014) ^[5]

Methodology

Participants

Arab schools were randomly chosen from the Arab secondary schools in the lower Galilee in Northern Israel. The study was conducted with 31 students in 10th grade (in the cities of Nazareth and Sakhnin, and in the villages of Reine and Kfar-Kana). The participants consisted of both male and female students.

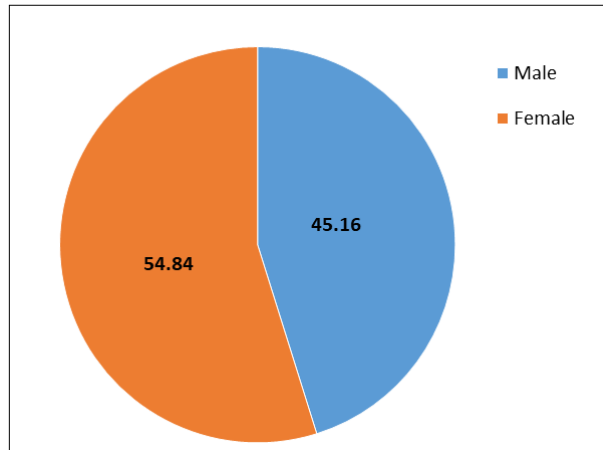


Fig 1: Distribution of the Research Subjects by Gender

The Research Instruments

The researcher used two questionnaires as the research instruments to collect the data. Yohanna (2016) [59] developed the questionnaires. They aimed to investigate students' perception of the use of songs in English on-English vocabulary. The first part of the questionnaire consists of close-ended questions and the second part consists of open-ended questions.

Close-ended questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of a list of 25 close-ended questions about students' perception of learning English through listening to songs in English. The questionnaire was designed by Yohanna (2016) [59] in the form of a 5 point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" with values 1-5 assigned to each item. The questionnaire had five dimensions: students' attitude towards listening to English songs (items 1-5), listening to English songs and students' language skills improvement (items 6-9), listening to songs and students' accuracy and fluency improvement (items 10-14), song lyrics and English vocabulary enhancement (items 15-20), and benefits of English songs on English vocabulary (items 21-25).

Open-ended questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 5 open-ended questions for students about songs in English such as "Do you like listening to English songs? Why? What is the benefit of using English songs on your English vocabulary development?"

Research questions

The present study attempted to answer the following questions

- Is there a significant effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition?
- What are other potential benefits of listening to songs in English?

Research findings and discussion

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition. For this purpose, 31 boys and girls were sampled from Arab schools, 55% of whom were girls and 45% were boys, and they were given a questionnaire that included 25 questions divided into five parts and a questionnaire with 5 open-ended questions.

The first part of the first questionnaire included 5 statements about the students' attitude towards listening to songs in English. The second part of the questionnaire included 4 statements about improving language techniques and abilities. The third part included 5 statements about improving the language and the fourth part included six statements about improving vocabulary as a result of listening to English songs. The final part of the questionnaire included 5 statements about the benefits of listening to songs in English. The findings of the study are presented in this chapter according to the research questions.

Findings related to the first research question

Is there a significant effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition? Table 1 presents the Person correlation among the study variables.

Table 1: Pearson correlation matrix among the study variables.

Variable	attitue	skills	accuray	vocabulay	benefits
Attitue	--				
Skills	.79**	--			
Accuracy	.72**	.79**	--		
Vocabuy	.68**	.84**	.85*	--	
Benefits	.66**	.83**	.83*	.90**	--

**P<.001

According to the findings in Table 1, it can be seen that there is a distinctly strong and positive relationship between the student's attitude towards listening to songs in English and the skills they gain because of listening to songs in English. That is, the more the student listens to songs in English, the more they increase their language skills (r=.79; p=.00).

According to Table 1, there is a significant positive relationship between the student's attitude toward listening to songs in English and their vocabulary acquisition (r=.68; p=.00). These findings reinforce previous findings that were mentioned in the literature review. It has been shown in several studies that repeated exposure to targeted vocabulary could enhance vocabulary acquisition (Horst, Cobb, & Meara, 1998; Webb & nation, 2017) [20, 57]. In addition, more than half of the students participated claimed that they love listening to songs in English because it helps them learn new words and increases their vocabulary acquisition.

Findings related to the second research question:

What are other potential benefits from listening to songs in English?

Figure 2 shows the percentage of the scale of agreement of listening to songs

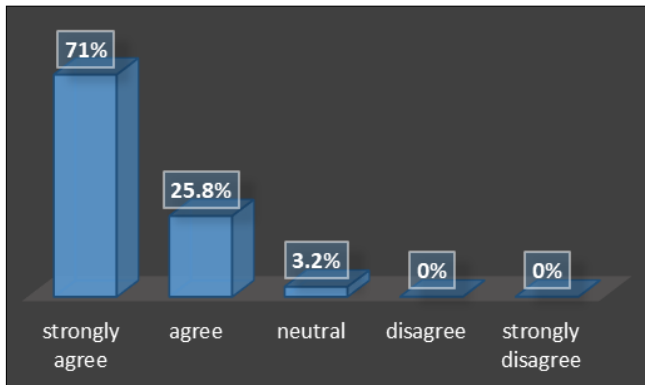


Fig 2: i like to listen to English songs

According to Figure 2, it can be seen that the majority of the sample appreciates and likes to listen to songs in English, with 71% of the sample absolutely liking and 26% liking and only 3% being neutral, not even one percent who do not like listening to music in English. According to the answers given in the second questionnaire, there are three reasons why most subjects love listening to songs in English: (a) the subjects think English songs are beautiful, (b) they enjoy and love listening to English songs, and (c) the subjects claim English songs contribute to their acquisition of the language and vocabulary. The following figure shows the percentage of usefulness of improving reading skill through listening to songs.

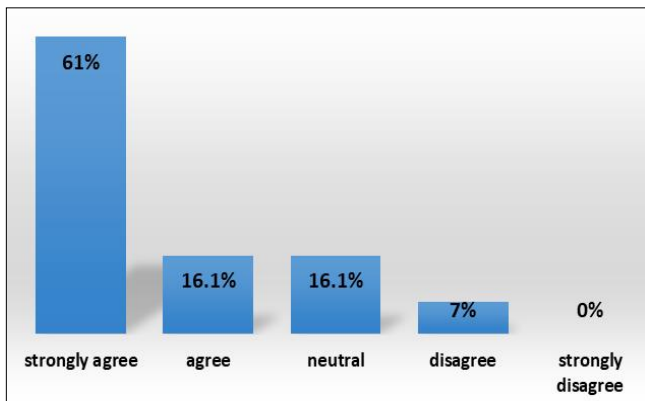


Fig 3: English songs are useful to improve reading skills

As shown in Figure 3, 61% strongly agree and 16% agree that English songs improve students' reading skills, with only 7% disagreeing. It is consistent with research findings that suggest listening to songs can enhance language ability. According to Saricoban and Metin (2000) [48], songs can enhance the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Harp (1988) [16] argues that using songs to teach reading is consistent with the nature and purpose of language and that it helps readers connect to meaningful content. When children listen to music, they are able to express their individual feelings and can become quite emotional. In Harp's opinion, children are ready to read lyrics once they have sung a song enough to become familiar with the tune and lyrics. The feeling of success that children get from reading language that they are already familiar with is then carried over to other reading situations. Figure 4 shows if Songs in English improve speaking skill.

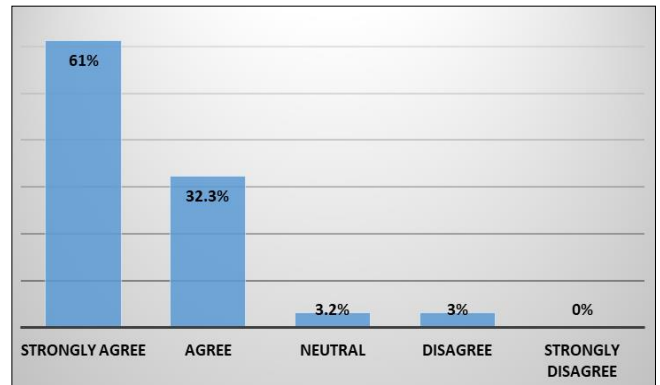


Fig 4: English songs are useful to improve speaking skills

According to the findings of Figure 4, it can be seen that the majority of the sample 93% (32% agree and 61% strongly agree) think that listening to songs in English improves and strengthens their speaking and language skills. Moreover, based on the answers of the open-ended questionnaire, most of the participants state that listening to songs in English helps them learn how to pronounce words correctly. These findings reinforce previous studies that have shown that music (and songs) can promote the development of pronunciation (Gan & Chong, 1998; Milovanov, & Tervaniemi, 2011; Palmer & Kelly, 1992; Slevc & Miyake, 2006) [11, 35, 42, 51]. A song combines linguistic and musical information; elements of songs are found in oral stories but are delivered through music rather than speech (Fonseca-Mora, *et al.* 2011; Medina, 1990) [10, 32]. Therefore, children's speaking skills, more specifically pronunciation, can be enhanced by using songs (Fonseca-Mora *et al.*, 2011) [10].

Table 5 presents the agreement percentage of searching for the meaning of difficult vocabulary in English songs

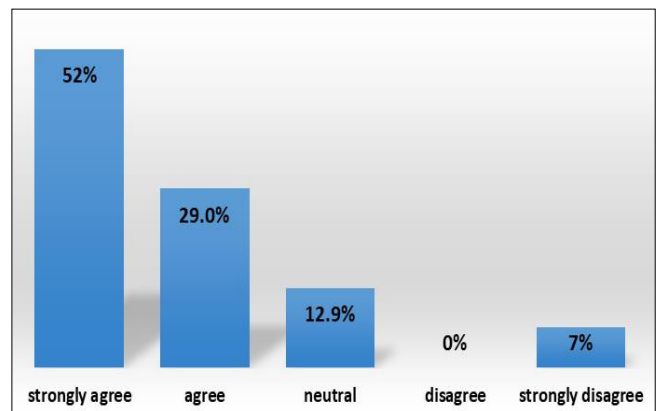


Fig 5: I always search for the meaning of a difficult English vocabulary in English songs

According to Figure 5, the subjects improve their language abilities by searching for meanings of unfamiliar English words they encounter while listening to English songs. Figure 5 indicates that 81% of the sample actually tries to find the meaning behind difficult words, 52% agree and 29% agree, and only 7% listen to a song in English and do not try to figure out the meaning. Hence, according to the second questionnaire, some students claim that listening to English songs can improve their English vocabulary because

it makes them search for the meaning of new words they hear. When people search for the meaning of new words/lyrics in English, they enhance their English vocabulary. Most of the research subjects state that they prefer to see the lyrics while they listen to a song in English because seeing the lyrics, according to them, helps them learn how to pronounce and write the words correctly.

These findings show a positive relationship between listening to songs in English and improvement of language abilities, which confirm previous research findings. Songs enhance students' vocabulary and English learning abilities, as well as the habit of learning the English language with more excitement (Alefshat, 2019) ^[1]. Studies have generally found that music and songs have a positive influence on English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. According to some research (Schön *et al.*, 2008; Mashayekh and Hashemi, 2011) ^[31, 50], music and songs facilitate language learning. Due to their motivational characteristics, they facilitate the acquisition of language (Coyle and Gracia, 2014) ^[7] and facilitate vocabulary and language learning (Chou, 2014; Coyle and Gracia, 2014) ^[5, 7].

Conclusion & recommendations

The current study focused on examining the effect of songs in English on EFL Arab secondary students' incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition. The study also examined what are other potential benefits of listening to songs in English.

Through the findings and the literature review, it can be concluded that listening to songs in English enhance English vocabulary acquisition. It was found that listening to songs in English has a positive relationship with incidental EFL vocabulary acquisition, as most of the students who participated learn many new vocabularies through listening to songs in English. Moreover, it was found that most of the students claim they listen to songs in English because it helps them learn new words in a fun way, unlike in schools. Furthermore, listening to English songs makes them better at pronunciation, spelling, and writing the language. Songs are an underestimated tool for learning a new language. Most of the subjects in this research state that they listen to songs in English every day and almost all day long, which could be concluded that songs are more than for fun or expressing emotions. The findings of this study proved that songs in English have a great effect on EFL vocabulary acquisition and on improving language abilities.

In this study, not even one percent was found who do not like listening to songs in English, so it is worthwhile to expand the sample population and concentrate on the results of sampled people who do not like listening to songs in English, so recommendations for further research can be proposed. Additionally, it is recommended to use additional research tools for the research, such as pre-test/post-test designs.

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