The impact of listening to english songs on EFL students' vocabulary acquisition: A literature review

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Article Info	Abstract
	This article explores the impact of listening to English songs on vocabulary learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The primary emphasis is placed on how songs, serving as informal and interactive inputs, assist learners in acquiring vocabulary effortlessly. The article employs a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review with elaborating upon major theories of second language acquisition, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, and Nation's lexicon learning model, which under describes the role of music-based input in these processes. Learning through songs enhances enjoyment during the recalling process due to colloquial phrases embedded in repetition and rhythm that is easy to memorize. Furthermore, in addition to vocabulary retention, the article also points out the issue of improving students' learning motivation, pronunciation, and even self-directed learning. With tools like YouTube or Spotify at their disposal, learners can be regularly exposed to the language they are trying to learn. Lastly it shares one of its conclusions: while English songs might appear primarily as entertainment mediums, they can be valuable aids for language acquisition. By bridging theoretical perspectives with practical implications, this article develops useful considerations for educators and researchers regarding the incorporation of music into vocabulary instruction within EFL teaching contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

In its application, English is used in various aspects of life, one of which is education. In this digital era, EFL learners are surrounded by English input through music, movies, podcasts, and social media. Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is not easy, it requires high motivation to go through the entire learning process. In learning a language, there are components and skills that need to be possessed. To master English, there are three components such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing that must be mastered (Upa et al., 2021). Among these, there is an equally important aspect that is necessary, namely vocabulary. Vocabulary is an important part of language proficiency. Thornbury's view (as cited in Wardiansyah & Elfrida, 2019) emphasize that studying vocabulary improves language more than concentrating only on grammar. Although grammar is important, learners can effectively convey their thoughts and ideas through vocabulary. Pressley, Levin, and McDaniel's view (as cited in Sternberg, 2014) distinguish two types of vocabulary learning: inferring the meaning of an unfamiliar word and remembering the meaning of a previously unknown word.

Music, especially English songs can be used as a means of learning English, especially for vocabulary acquisition. Music has been shown to improve rote memorization, when presented simultaneously with the knowledge. Metaxa (2013), discovered that memorization was enhanced by the rhythmic presentation of significant verbal information. The relationship between learning a language and music has many layers that go beyond the mere fact of teaching them simultaneously in school. Integrating music into language learning offers a more multidimensional approach to developing creativity, emotional engagement, and cultural awareness while simultaneously enhancing linguistic proficiency. On the other hand, language acquisition aids in music education by offering a framework for lyrical interpretation, cultural investigation, and the growth of communication abilities (Chen et al., 2024). According to Nation (2013), repeated exposure to vocabulary through listening, particularly when the input is comprehensible and engaging, strengthens learners' ability to acquire and retain new words. There are so many songs with basic English, where each song has repetition that makes learners remember the vocabulary. Lyrics in songs reflect both formal and informal language styles. Therefore, listening to English songs in daily life is useful not only for entertainment, but also for improving language skills and motivation.

In a study conducted by Murphey (1992), it was explained that songs can improve learners' grammar and listening comprehension, which will allow them enable to speak more effectively. In traditional classroom teaching, formal vocabulary learning is usually emphasized through rote memorization and textbook-based activities. Although these methods are important, they might not completely meet students' need for contextualized language exposure. Additional knowledge that can be found from listening to English songs is about language variation, the use of idioms, slang, and figurative language. The process of vocabulary acquisition through songs can occur unconsciously. Krashen's view (as cited in Metaxa, 2013), found that vocabulary can be acquired incidentally through listening or reading. When someone listens to a song repeatedly, they will become more familiar with the words, they might even memorize the entire song without trying to memorize it. When they find a new or unfamiliar word, they may look up its meaning or translate it into their native language until they understand it. This process reflects how vocabulary is naturally acquired by learners.

Even though vocabulary acquisition has been extensively studied in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), most research has focused on explicit learning approaches and formal educational settings. In contrast, theoretical studies on informal learning situations are limited, particularly when it comes to the role of English songs as a vocabulary development tool. EFL students often listen to English songs for enjoyment or learning purposes, using platforms like Spotify and YouTube. Even without consciously analyzing lyrics, they absorb language, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Songs may also enhance listening and speaking skills, making them a valuable learning tool. Although songs provide rich, authentic input and have the potential to enhance learners' motivation and exposure to natural language use (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011), the specific cognitive and linguistic processes involved are still unexplored.

Furthermore, the majority of earlier research was carried out before the transition to digital media consumption. Today's streaming platforms, such as Spotify and YouTube, provide learners with constant and personal access to English music, creating a significantly different learning environment compared to previous decades. This change in technology further supports an investigation of the ways in which exposure to informal music can assist in vocabulary acquisition in

current EFL environments. Therefore, it is required to consider how English songs, when they are heard in everyday life, may assist EFL learners improve their vocabulary. This conceptual gap is particularly relevant in a time when digital streaming platforms have made music consumption exstensive.

To support the relevance of English songs in vocabulary acquisition, several key theories in cognitive and language learning offer foundational insights. Paivio (1990) introduces and explains Dual Coding Theory (DCT), a cognitive theory that suggests two distinct but connected systems, a nonverbal (imaginal) system for mental representation and a verbal system for language support human memory and learning. The idea that dual coding, which combines verbal (lyrics) and nonverbal (melody, imagery produced by songs) inputs, improves memory retention by creating multiple retrieval ways is especially important to vocabulary development. The book offers empirical evidence that items that are dual-coded, that is recorded both verbally and imaginally are more likely to be remembered than those that are encoded in a single modality. This is especially true for EFL students who watch lyric videos of English songs, as lexical input is reinforced through both visual and aural channels.

Krashen (1985) Input Hypothesis further support the value of music in language learning. He argued that language acquired when learners are exposed to input that is both understandable and just slightly bit beyond their current level of proficiency, a process known as "i+1." Krashen's approach rationally supports the educational use of English songs with repetitive and context-rich lyrics as a source of natural, understandable input, even though he does not specifically mention songs or music in this part. This is particularly important for EFL students since music enhances openness to language intake and facilitates incidental vocabulary acquisition by lowering the effective filter, another idea Krashen presented.

Nation (2013) presents a comprehensive framework for vocabulary acquisition in second and foreign language learning. Emphasizing the importance of meaning-focused input, output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. Within this framework, listening is categorized as a type of meaning-focused input that exposes learners to words in natural and meaningful contexts. He also outlines four key conditions that support vocabulary learning: noticing, retrieval, creative use, and repetition, all of which can be achieved through interactive listening experiences like music. Songs, in particular, offer context clues that help learners infer word meanings, promoting incidental learning.

When integrated, these theories establish a strong foundation for viewing English music as a powerful form of informal language input. They collectively show how combining verbal and nonverbal input, exposure to accessible language, and contextual repetition enhances vocabulary learning in EFL settings.

The purpose of this article is to explore how listening to English songs in daily life contributes to EFL learners' vocabulary development. Specifically, it aims to examine the cognitive and affective processes involved in music-based language learning by applying relevant Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. To archieve this, the article employs a systematic literature review method to analyze and synthesize existing research related to the use of English songs in vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the meaningful value of songs for educational tool.

This topic is significant because it addresses the gap between formal classroom instruction and informal language exposure in real-life contexts. English songs provide listeners frequent exposure to vocabulary, culturally appropriate, and also enjoyable. Furthermore, English songs is easily accessible nowadays, very popular among young learner and easily incorporated into their everyday activities outside the classroom. It suggests that it may encourage incidental learning, in which vocabulary is acquired as a result of engaging activity rather than through a formal education setting (Hulstijn, 2003). Therefore, exploring the educational advantages of music is highly important for both SLA researchers and language educators looking for a more comprehensive and learner-centered strategy.

The context, issue, goal, and importance of using English songs as vocabulary-building assists are addressed in the introduction of this article. A thorough analysis of relevant research is provided in the next part, with an emphasis on incidental learning, theories of vocabulary acquisition, and the educational advantages of music in EFL contexts. The theoretical framework supporting the analysis is then discussed, incorporating ideas from cognitive learning and second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Along with implications for language teachers and future study, the final

section summarizes the main points and offers a conceptual model that shows how English songs can facilitate incidental vocabulary learning.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a *systematic literature review* method to examine how the habit of listening to English songs in daily life can support vocabulary acquisition in learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Being conceptual in nature, this research does not involve direct participants or empirical data. The data collection procedure was conducted through searching relevant and credible scientific sources, such as indexed journals, academic books, and conference proceedings.

The review followed a structured process to ensure clarity, transparency, and replicability. First, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to guide the selection of literature. Inclusion criteria focused on studies written in English, relevant to EFL or ESL contexts, and specifically addressing vocabulary learning through music, songs, or informal audio input. Studies that focused on other language skills or unrelated domains were excluded. The search was conducted through several major databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, Elsevier, and ResearchGate, using the keywords "English songs," "vocabulary acquisition," "EFL," "music in language learning," and "incidental learning," combined with Boolean operators (AND, OR) to narrow down the search results.

After the initial search process, all duplicate documents were removed, and then screened by title and abstract to ensure relevance to the focus of the study. Articles or sources that relevant were then read thoroughly to evaluate the appropriateness of the topic, theoretical framework, and methodology used. The inclusion criteria for this study were publications that explicitly addressed vocabulary learning in EFL contexts through music or song, used theoretical or empirical approaches, and were published in English. Sources that were irrelevant, too general, or did not focus on vocabulary acquisition through song were excluded from the analysis. The analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring themes, theoretical connections, and pedagogical insights across the literature.

In the analysis process, the selected studies were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This involved organizing the data into emerging themes and topic related to vocabulary learning, SLA theories, learner motivation, emotional engagement, and the role of digital platforms such as Spotify and YouTube. Furthermore, the author compared findings across studies to identify consistencies, variations, and theoretical implications. This comparative approach allowed the synthesis of both theoretical and practical perspectives on how English songs, when listened to informally and repeatedly can facilitate natural vocabulary acquisition. The analysis followed the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The remaining articles were screened first by title and abstract, and then by full-text reading based on the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 105 records were initially identified through four academic databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, ELSIEVE, ResearchGate, using a combination of relevant keywords. After removing duplicate records, 95 articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Sixty articles were excluded for being irrelevant or off-topic. The remaining 35 articles underwent full-text evaluation, after which 10 were excluded based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, 25 articles were considered eligible and included in the qualitative synthesis. The entire screening and selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram below.
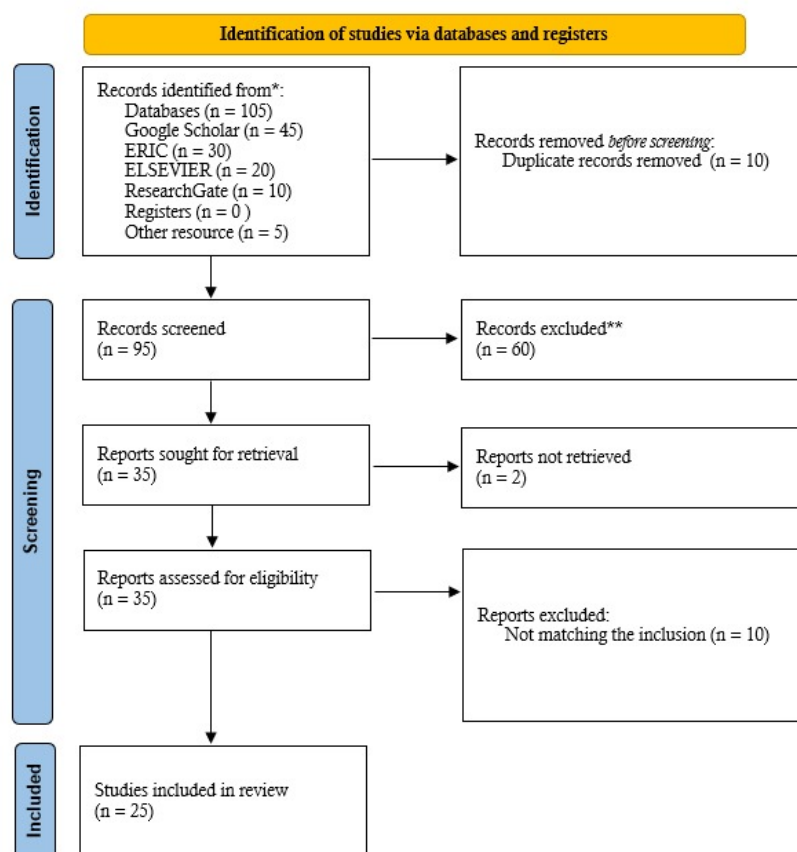
Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of systematic literature review

Ethically, this research upholds academic integrity by fully citing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. As there were no human participants involved, formal ethical approval was not required. However, all stages of data collection and analysis were conducted systematically and transparently to ensure replicability. This study aims to make a conceptual contribution to the development of music-based vocabulary learning models in a broader EFL context, as well as offer recommendations for educators and researchers in utilizing songs as an effective and enjoyable learning media.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion is structured thematically, following the key aspects identified in the reviewed literature that reveal how music-based language exposure facilitates vocabulary acquisition. These aspects include cognitive and affective benefits of songs, the role of repetition and contextual input in incidental vocabulary learning, the influence of digital access and learner engagement in informal learning environments. This discussion synthesize both theoretical insights and empirical evidence.

Linguistic Features of Songs Supporting Vocabulary Learning

The ability of songs to help learners learn new words is a result of their unique linguistic structure and their emotional and motivational appeal. Songs, unlike conventional teaching materials, use rhythmic, repetitive, context-embedded structures to communicate language, increasing the appeal and retention of input. Songs often reflect the way people speak in everyday life and include informal expressions, making them a valuable source of real-world language exposure. For English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, these linguistic features are particularly advantageous because they allow for incidental vocabulary learning in relevant situations. In addition, the rhythmic and structural elements of songs often encourage deep processing and retention, two key components of successful vocabulary acquisition.

Repetition is one of the key linguistic features in songs that significantly supports vocabulary learning by increasing exposure to vocabulary in a meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable way. In many English songs, certain phrases or expressions are often repeated, especially in the chorus or refrain, allowing learners to encounter the same vocabulary multiple times without the need for intentional memorization. This repeated exposure helps reinforce word forms, meanings, and usage, making it easier for learners to recognize, remember, and master vocabulary. Zhang (2022) found that repetition plays an important role in vocabulary acquisition because it helps learners to more easily recognize, remember, and master vocabulary through repeated listening experiences. In his study, he found that at least seven repetitions were needed for significant vocabulary gains through listening-based learning. This means that repetitive auditory input such as in songs can be very effective if organized with sufficient frequency. In addition, learners usually replay their favorite songs voluntarily, so they are indirectly involved in the repetition process that supports independent learning. This process not only helps enrich vocabulary but also improves word recognition and listening fluency. Murphey (1992) explains that repetition in songs can encourage deeper cognitive processing and support the retrieval of information from memory, making it ideal for supporting language acquisition. Similarly, Nation (2013) identified that repetition is one of the important requirements in vocabulary learning, especially when accompanied by meaningful input such as music. Alipour et al. (2012) stated the repetitive nature of song lyrics, especially in genres such as pop and country, significantly improve students' ability to remember vocabulary and retain it. This suggests that repeated exposure to song lyrics plays an important role in instilling new vocabulary and improving pronunciation through frequent auditory reinforcement.

Meanwhile, the rhythm in songs also plays an important role in supporting vocabulary learning. Rhythm helps learners group words or phrases into more recognizable and memorable sound units, known as phonological chunking. A study by Ghidhaoui (2024), investigated Hungarian EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the use of songs in language learning. Through semi-structured interviews with five teachers at a Budapest University. Songs are widely seen by EFL teachers as useful resources for language acquisition. They believe that songs facilitate the retention of new vocabulary and help students with pronunciation, rhythm, and stress patterns.

Another important linguistic feature is the presence of contextualized vocabulary within songs. Many songs unfold narratives, depict emotional experiences, or describe everyday situations, offering learners semantic and situational clues to deduce meaning. This context-based input encourages inferencing, a skill essential for vocabulary development and reading/listening comprehension (Nation, 2013). Songs with clear themes such as love, social struggles, or identity guide learners to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary based on the surrounding narrative. By listening to songs repeatedly, learners not only memorize vocabulary, but also understand its use in realistic contexts. This process encourages learners to read or infer the meaning of words without having to rely on a dictionary, which is an important strategy in learning comprehension. Therefore, songs that contain storylines and situational contexts provide a more in-depth and meaningful learning experience for foreign language learners, especially in terms of vocabulary mastery.

In addition to repetition and context, English songs often contain expressions that are rarely found in textbooks, such as idioms, slang, and phrasal verbs. The language used in songs tends to reflect the way people speak in everyday life, giving students the opportunity to learn more real and relevant language. Exposure to informal language like this is essential for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, as it helps them understand how words and phrases are used in natural contexts. Karim et al. (2022) reported that one respondent enjoyed learning vocabulary through songs because he got a lot of vocabulary in the form of formal and informal expressions, as well as learning about slang, intonation and pronunciation. Songs can also be a fun way to introduce expressions that are difficult to explain directly in class, especially since the repetition of lyrics and the rhythm of the music make it easier to understand and remember. Furthermore, Butar Butar & Katemba (2023) found that EFL students have a positive perception of vocabulary learning through songs, because it helps them understand the meaning of words in a fun and memorable context. In this way, songs not only enrich vocabulary but also help students communicate in a more natural and situationally appropriate way.

Furthermore, listening to English songs can significantly enhance learners' pronunciation and intonation skills. Songs naturally present language in the context of prosody, emphasizing rhythm, stress patterns and intonation, which are all important components of pronunciation. These features help learners develop sound discrimination skills, allowing them to recognize and differentiate

between words that sound similar, which is important for listening comprehension and vocabulary development. EFL learners often struggle to understand word boundaries and syllable stress through written text, but the melodic and rhythmic aspects of songs help them understand and comprehend more effectively (Sevik, 2012). Lestari & Hardiyanti (2020) found that slow-tempo songs are preferred because they help learners understand the pronunciation of words more clearly and easily understood, thus supporting the vocabulary acquisition process. Songs also allow students to sing back and imitate the pronunciation of native speakers, which strengthens speaking skills and accelerates vocabulary memorization. When learners listen to songs sung by native speakers, they also get a real-life example of how pronunciation and intonation are used naturally. As Setia et al. (2012) noted, songs not only convey meaning through lyrics, but also through phonetic, syntactic and semantic elements which makes them a comprehensive tool in language learning. These linguistic features make English songs effective for supporting vocabulary learning in informal settings. The repetition and rhythm found in songs enhance memory retention and help learners recognize word patterns more easily. Contextualized lyrics provide meaningful input, allowing learners to infer word meanings naturally. Additionally, songs introduce idiomatic and informal expressions not often found in textbooks, which helps learners understand real-life language use. Regular exposure to songs also improves pronunciation, intonation, and listening skills, making them both engaging and educational for EFL learners.

Daily Listening as Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Incidental vocabulary learning refers to the unintentional acquisition of lexical items through exposure to language input during activities that do not have vocabulary learning as their primary focus (Hulstijn, 2013). It contrasts with intentional learning, where learners consciously try to acquire new words. In incidental learning, vocabulary is acquired as a by-product of comprehension-focused activities, such as reading, listening, or watching, without explicit instruction. Nation (2013) emphasized that this type of learning is particularly effective when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in authentic contexts, which allows them to infer meanings and gradually internalize word forms and meanings.

English songs offer a rich and engaging way for learners to acquire new vocabulary naturally. Unlike textbooks or traditional materials, songs often reflect everyday language, include cultural references, and carry emotional meaning, making them easier to connect with and remember (Murphey, 1992). When EFL students make a habit of listening to English songs as part of their daily routine, they are unknowingly participating in vocabulary learning. Even though this kind of listening is passive, it surrounds learners with continuous exposure to English in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

Songs are particularly effective for vocabulary learning because learners often listen to their favorite songs repeatedly, which gives them many chances to encounter the same words. Listening to songs while commuting, working out, or just relaxing, can absorb language through repeated exposure without feeling mentally overwhelmed. Over time, this helps vocabulary retention in their memory in a natural way. According to Karim et al. (2022), many learners find that listening to English songs in their spare time not only improves their vocabulary but also makes learning more enjoyable. As Nation (2013) noted, frequent and unintentional exposure to lyrics promotes deeper processing of word meanings and supports long-term vocabulary retention.

The emotional and psychological effects of listening to music outside the classroom also play an important role in supporting incidental vocabulary learning. Music helps create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, which lowers anxiety and makes it easier for learners to absorb new language. In a study by Karim et al. (2022), one participant shared that they listened to English songs during everyday activities like showering, studying, or eating, moments that provided repeated and low-pressure exposure to English. Similarly, Azmin Md Zamin et al. (2020) found that music promotes a stress-free and motivating atmosphere, helping learners feel more confident and willing to use English beyond the classroom.

A Conceptual Framework for Vocabulary Acquisition

Although music is increasingly seen as a valuable tool in language education, there is still a lack of clear theoretical models that explain how informal activities like listening to English songs actually help learners build their vocabulary. Research has shown that songs can support vocabulary learning (Murphey, 1992). Nation (2013) highlights the importance of developing frameworks that explain

how learners pick up vocabulary incidentally, particularly through engaging and repetitive input. Without such a model, teachers may struggle to use music effectively in their teaching.

The proposed framework includes three interrelated components: input exposure, cognitive-affective processing, and vocabulary acquisition outcomes. This structure draws from Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which stresses the importance of meaningful exposure and cognitive engagement for language acquisition. By synthesizing these perspectives, the framework aims to bridge cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements in vocabulary development via song listening. Input exposure refers to how frequently and in what ways learners interact with English songs. Nation and Webb (2011) emphasize that encountering vocabulary repeatedly and in a range of contexts is crucial for meaningful and lasting learning. Songs naturally offer this kind of input through their use of rhythm and repetition (Murphey, 1992). In addition, regular exposure to songs can improve learners' listening skills and awareness of English sounds, which in turn supports their vocabulary development.

Learners interact with song lyrics both cognitively and emotionally. This aligned with Paivio's (1990) Dual Coding Theory, suggesting that verbal murphand non-verbal associations (e.g., melody and lyrics) strengthen memory. When learners are regularly exposed to English songs and actively engage with them both mentally and emotionally, it helps build their vocabulary. This includes both receptive vocabulary (words they can recognize and understand) and productive vocabulary (words they can use idependently). Nation (2013), explains that while understanding words is important, using them correctly requires repeated and meaningful exposure. The impact of listening to songs on vocabulary learning can differ based on several influencing factors.
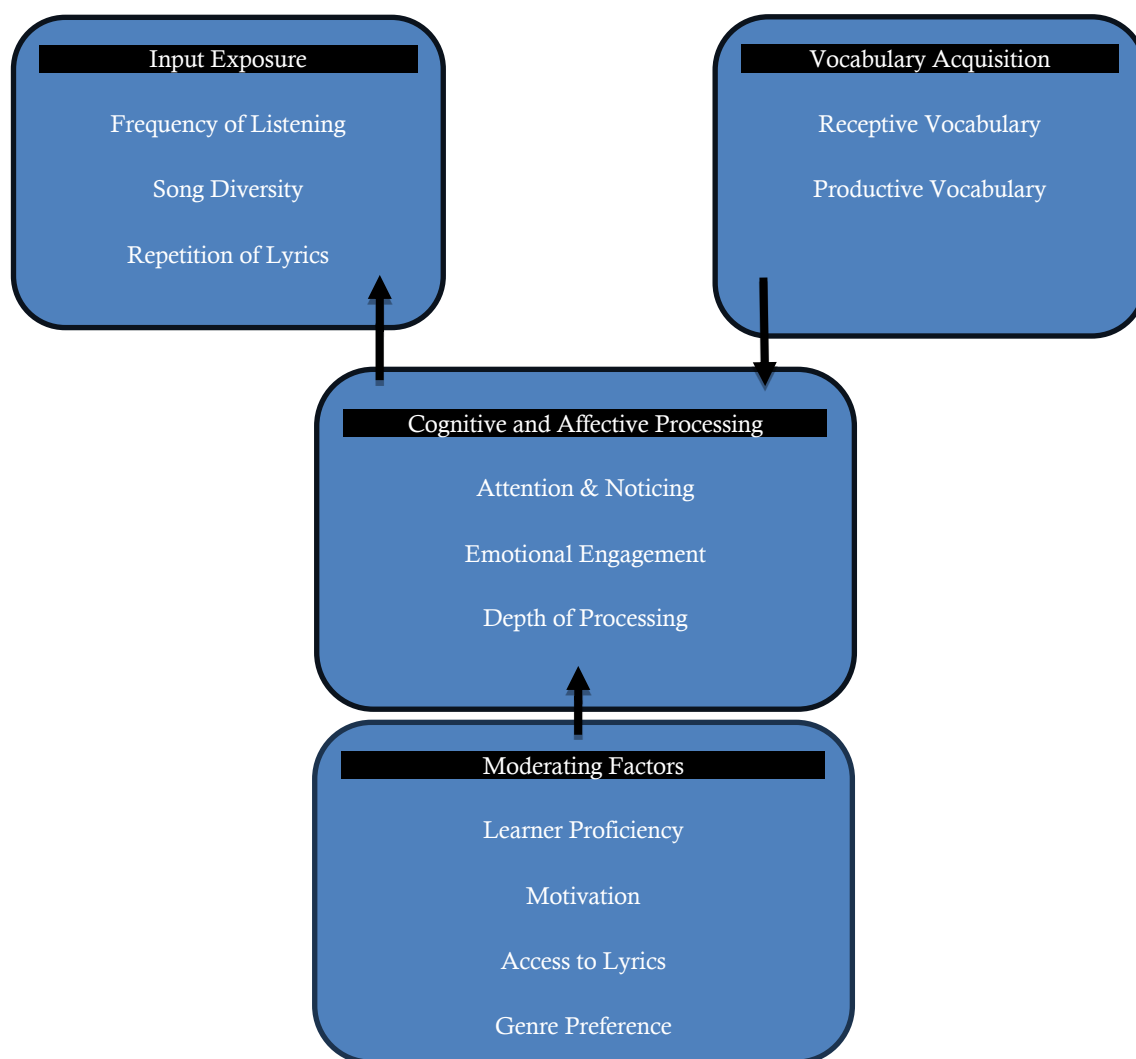

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Pedagogical Implications

Selecting songs that are appropriate to the age and ability level of students is an important first step in making vocabulary learning through songs effective. Teachers need to choose songs that are not only interesting, but also appropriate to the age, culture, and language abilities of students. Songs can be very helpful in language learning if the content is in line with students' cognitive, emotional, and language abilities. Songs that are too difficult or culturally unfamiliar can actually confuse and disinterest students. Therefore, teachers should have clear criteria for selecting songs. For example, paying attention to the level of difficulty of the vocabulary, the theme of the song, the repetition of lyrics, and the comprehensibility of the song. According to Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011), songs that are rhythmic and have a lot of repetition are more effective in helping students especially beginners, remember new vocabulary. Songs like this make it easier for the brain to store information because of their repetitive and familiar nature. This is where the teacher's role is very important in assessing whether the selected song supports the desired vocabulary mastery and can be integrated into classroom learning activities.

Beyond material selection, integrating music-based learning tasks into the EFL classroom provides an effective and engaging way to enhance vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension. Activities such as gap-filling, matching exercises, and translating lyrics not only increase learners' exposure to new words in context, but also enhance active listening and processing skills. Incorporating these tasks into a broader EFL framework can help bridge the gap between formal and informal learning, making lessons more relevant and enjoyable. Therefore, instructional designs that embed music-based exercises into the classroom not only support vocabulary development but also contribute to a richer and more dynamic language learning experience.

In addition, increasing student engagement and autonomy in vocabulary acquisition can be effectively achieved through strategies that encourage active participation and self-directed learning. One such approach is maintaining a song journal or creating vocabulary flashcards derived from song lyrics. These practices not only personalize the learning experience but also improve vocabulary retention by allowing students to interact with the language in a meaningful context. A study by Lestari and Hardiyanti (2020) highlighted that Indonesian EFL students who engaged with English songs independently reported increased vocabulary acquisition and greater enjoyment in learning. Similarly, a study by Graham and Zhang (2024) emphasized the role of strategy use in vocabulary learning through listening, noting that learners who actively used metacognitive strategies experienced deeper processing and better retention of new vocabulary.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Using English songs as a vocabulary learning tool offers several significant benefits to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. One of the most significant benefits is that songs can increase students' motivation and foster independence in their learning. Unlike traditional textbook materials, songs are inherently fun, memorable, and emotionally engaging. Their rhythm and repetition make them more memorable, encouraging students to engage with the language outside of the classroom. When learners choose to listen to English songs in their free time, they essentially take control of their own learning process, which fosters autonomy and learning habits. In addition, songs can play an important role in developing students' cultural awareness. Lyrics often reflect the cultural values, traditions, social issues, and everyday expressions of native speakers. By engaging with this authentic content, learners gain a deeper understanding of the cultural context of the language, which can improve their ability to communicate appropriately and confidently in real-world situations. Furthermore, English songs support not only vocabulary development but also listening and pronunciation skills. When students are repeatedly exposed to the natural pronunciation, stress patterns, and intonation used by native speakers, they begin to internalize the correct speech models. Singing along to songs provides an opportunity to practice active pronunciation in a fun, low-pressure setting, helping students improve their English speaking fluency. Overall, incorporating English songs into language learning is a practical and enjoyable method that supports vocabulary growth while improving listening comprehension, cultural understanding, and pronunciation.

Although English songs can be an engaging tool for vocabulary acquisition, they also present certain challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. One of the main challenges is that song lyrics often contain non-standard grammar, slang, contractions, or poetic language that may confuse learners, especially beginners. Biganičová (2020) observed that song lyrics often contain

grammatical mistakes that may lead learners to question or even disregard grammatical norms, particularly when such mistakes appear normalized through repeated listening. For example, the use of double negation or unconventional sentence constructions in songs may contradict standard grammar rules taught in class. Furthermore, the poetic nature of lyrics often involves figurative language, such as metaphors and idioms, which can be difficult for learners to interpret without proper context (Putri et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the role of English songs as a meaningful and engaging tool for incidental vocabulary acquisition in EFL learning contexts. The discussion highlights that English songs are not merely entertainment but also serve as powerful learning materials that offer authentic, emotional, and repetitive exposure to language. Through natural engagement with lyrics, learners encounter vocabulary in context, enhancing both recognition and retention. This is in line with language acquisition theories such as Paivio's (1990) Dual Coding Theory which emphasizes the importance of dual coding, verbal and nonverbal, in strengthening memory, and Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis Theory which highlights the importance of exposure to comprehensible and interesting input (i+1) in language acquisition. From a cognitive perspective, songs engage both auditory and visual processing pathways. Lyric videos, for example, present words in writing while listening, thus facilitating dual coding that strengthens vocabulary retention. Repetition in songs provides repeated exposure to the same words or phrases in meaningful contexts, a condition that Nation (2013) argues is important for incidental vocabulary learning. Songs also feature lively and idiomatic language, including informal expressions, slang, and common phrases not found in textbooks. This gives learners access to more natural and contextual language, thereby enhancing their communicative competence. The affective aspect cannot be ignored either. Songs have a strong emotional appeal, which can lower the learner's affective filter, according to Krashen's theory. When learners feel happy, relaxed, and entertained while learning, they become more open to language input and more easily absorb new vocabulary. Songs also motivate learners to engage actively and independently, especially since music is part of everyday life, especially in the digital age. Access to English songs is very easy through platforms such as Spotify and YouTube, making music a flexible, affordable, and sustainable learning medium.

Linguistically, English songs present many features that support vocabulary acquisition. The repetitive and rhythmic structure of songs helps phonological processing, word recognition, and pronunciation. Songs also encourage deep engagement with meaning because they often convey stories, emotional themes, and everyday experiences. All of these elements provide context that helps learners guess the meaning of new words, without having to rely on a dictionary or translation. This strengthens inferencing and comprehension skills, two important components of vocabulary learning. The pedagogical implications of these findings are broad. Songs can be utilized in formal learning through the integration of music-based activities, such as gap-filling, translating lyrics, rephrasing song verses, and thematic discussions based on song content. Such activities not only enrich vocabulary, but also improve listening, speaking, and reading skills in English. On the other hand, in informal learning contexts, songs provide opportunities for students to learn independently outside the classroom, build student-centered learning habits, and create a fun learning atmosphere. However, despite the many benefits offered, the use of songs in learning also has its own challenges. Some song lyrics contain non-standard grammatical structures, use of figures of speech, or figurative expressions that can be confusing for learners, especially at the elementary level. This requires the teacher to play an active role in selecting songs that are appropriate to the students' ability level, as well as providing guidance when the meaning of the lyrics is difficult to understand. Teachers also need to consider age, cultural background, and learning objectives when selecting songs to use in class. Songs that are too difficult or unfamiliar can reduce students' motivation and even lead to linguistic misconceptions.

To optimize the use of songs in EFL learning, several recommendations can be put forward. First, in terms of pedagogy, teachers need to systematically incorporate songs into learning planning. Songs that have high repetition, clear pronunciation, and relevant themes are highly recommended for use in class. Learning activities can include analyzing the meaning of lyrics, matching words, making vocabulary journals from songs, and practicing pronunciation using shadowing or karaoke methods. Second, students should be encouraged to develop independent music-based learning strategies, such as making a list of favorite songs to study, noting down new vocabulary from lyrics,

or using song-based learning applications. These strategies encourage personal engagement and strengthen vocabulary skills through use in real and emotional contexts. Third, further research should focus on experimental studies that measure the impact of songs on vocabulary development quantitatively are highly recommended. Research can also expand the scope by examining individual differences in response to song-based learning, including differences in age, learning style, and musical background.

Finally, in this digital era, it is important to explore how digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, or Spotify mediate language exposure through music. Analysis of user behavior such as lyrics search, interaction with music content, and listening frequency can provide additional insights into the role of music in incidental language acquisition. Overall, this article discusses the position of English songs as an effective, engaging, and flexible medium for vocabulary acquisition for EFL learners. Songs combine cognitive, linguistic, and affective theories in one medium that is able to bridge formal classroom learning and language exposure in everyday life. With proper integration, both by educators and learners, songs can be an effective bridge to deeper and more contextualized vocabulary mastery. This supports a language learning approach that is not only oriented towards academic outcomes, but also a fun, sustainable, and meaningful learning experiences.

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