

English Language Teachers' Perceptions towards Using Educational Songs to Teach the New Vocabulary for First Intermediate Stage EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to know the perceptions of English language teachers towards teaching English vocabulary for first intermediate stage students using educational songs as an educational tool. The current study is classified as a quantitative study. The study sample consisted of 30 EFL teachers from different intermediate schools in Ramadi city. Data were collected using the closed questionnaire using Google Forms. The results were analyzed using SPSS software. The questionnaire results indicated that EFL teachers' perceptions were positive towards improving first intermediate stage students' vocabulary learning using songs.

Keywords: English language teachers' perceptions, educational songs, and vocabulary.

تصورات مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية حول استخدام استراتيجيات الاغاني التعليمية لتدريس المفردات الجديدة لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلفة اجنبية في الصف الاول المتوسط

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المخلص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة تصورات مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية حول تدريس مفردات اللغة الانكليزية باستخدام الأغاني التعليمية كوسيلة تعليمية في المرحلة المتوسطة. تصنف الدراسة الحالية على انها دراسة كمية. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ٣٠ مدرسا للغة الانكليزية من المدارس المتوسطة في مدينة الرمادي. تم الحصول على البيانات من الاستبيان المغلق من خلال استخدام نموذج كوكل. تم تحليل النتائج باستخدام برنامج SPSS. أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان

أن المدرسين لديهم تصورات إيجابية حول استخدام الأغاني الانكليزية التعليمية لتحسين طريقة اكتساب المفردات الجديدة لطلاب الصف الاول المتوسط.
الكلمات المفتاحية: تصورات مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية، الاغاني التعليمية، و المفردات.

Introduction

English is considered a foreign language in Iraq. It is very important to learn English because all countries use it to communicate with each other. Learning the language is very necessary for people to ensure interaction with others and to interact with others. Al-Abdali, (2024a) stated, "Language cannot be separated from human life as humans need to communicate with others" (p.3). Being an international language, there is a necessity to learn and speak English language all over the world. Al-Fahadawi and Al-Abdali, (2024) argued, The English language is considered an important lesson taught in Iraqi schools. Therefore, education in Iraq depends on teaching the language from the first years of students' lives.

Vocabulary is an important linguistic component because it can support learners in developing their language skills. Language cannot be separated from vocabulary. When students try to speak English well, they must master vocabulary as much as possible. In fact, in daily classroom activities, students often have difficulty using and understanding vocabulary, as well as distinguishing between verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. Not only middle school students but also university students are less knowledgeable about vocabulary. Vocabulary represents an important aspect in language learning and teaching, as without vocabulary, learners will not be able to successfully develop other skills, as it determines and defines the level of language learners.

Vocabulary is the content and functional words of the language that is learned in order to be used in performing any task that requires oral or written communication, both of which are types of communication.

Mastering vocabulary can make a learner an effective speaker, a good listener, a reader, and a writer equally. Therefore, teaching and learning vocabulary requires special attention from both teachers and learners.

Throughout human history, music and songs have played an important role in various aspects of people lives, including as a means of creative expression of feelings, in important celebrations, and as a source of entertainment. In particular, songs that combine the poetic expression of words and melodies are universal elements for all cultures.

Songs have become part of the lifestyle of contemporary people. Technology today allows people listen to music anytime / anywhere. English songs can be used for teaching English because they provide opportunities to practice vocabulary (Antika, 2021; Bawawa, 2020; Millington, 2011) (as cited in a study by Karim, Sudiro, and Annisa, 2022). In the same vein, Zamien et. al., (2020 as cited in a study by Karim, Sudiro, and Annisa, 2022), English language teachers use songs as a means to learn and teach vocabulary as it helps improving English language EFL students.

Adnyani & Dewi (2020) stated, using songs in education could motivate students. Lengkoan's (2017) statements support this claim that teaching with songs give a sense of enjoyment for both students and teachers.

When talking about vocabulary, it has a main role on developing EFL students' effective communication. In the same context, and not far from the idea of the importance of vocabulary, it is necessary for teachers to look for new methods for teaching vocabulary for students. Thus, the researchers Dilin Jasma (2017 cited in a study by Karim, Sudiro, and Annisa, 2022) pointed out, learners always fail to express themselves, as they do not have enough deal of vocabulary. Thus, they need more words to express new ideas. As a result, the researchers

think that using songs might be useful for enhancing EFL students' vocabulary.

Vocabulary

The purpose of teaching vocabulary is to enable students to speak the target language. All languages around the world are based on learning their vocabulary. Therefore, teaching vocabulary must be given great importance in teaching to enable students to speak fluently and easily (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Valianti, 2017).

This claim confirms the findings of Limbong (2012) that the more the learner's vocabulary in a language increases his understanding of the target language and it will be easier for him to speak in that language with better quality, which will reflect on their communicative abilities (Soryanto, et al., 2021). In the same context, Richards and Ranandia (2002) link the development of the learner's experience to the greater the diversity of his vocabulary, and thus the opportunity to develop his skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing alike will increase.

Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary in English language education is mandatory in the curricula (Al-Fahadawi and Al-Abdali, 2024). Iraqi students face difficulties in communicating in English effectively. The researcher thinks that this might be attributed to the poor knowledge of vocabulary, which hinders them using language successfully. Therefore, teachers thought that using songs would make students more relaxed and create a fun learning environment. Understanding the importance of teaching vocabulary to English language learners will increase their awareness of using new methods and strategies for learning vocabulary, including the use of songs.

Problem of the study

Teaching English as a foreign language needs utilizing different approaches, methods, and techniques. In the educational system in

Iraq, communicative approach is the currently approach used to teach English in schools. Unfortunately, students still struggle with learning new vocabulary and pronunciation. Without sufficient vocabulary and correct pronunciation, students cannot communicate and express themselves successfully. Some researchers and teachers believe that learning vocabulary is a difficult task and does not result in producing many words that help students in their roles as language learners, but rather leads to a limited vocabulary that hinders language learning. According to Lappi (2009), EFL students desire to develop their skills and vocabulary in a relaxing and motivating ways. Thus, vocabulary-based-learning opened the door towards learning vocabulary in a very easy way.

Study Aim

The aim of the current study is to identify the perceptions of English language teachers regarding the use of educational songs strategy for teaching new vocabulary to English language learners as a foreign language in the first intermediate grade.

Study Importance

The importance of the current study stems from the lack of awareness among some teachers in applying teaching methodologies during teaching, such as educational songs to motivate students to memorize and pronounce new vocabulary during their journey of learning English as a foreign language, enabling them to communicate and express their ideas accurately. Learning new vocabulary is an essential and important part when starting to learn any foreign or second language. It is expected that the results of this study will help English language teachers to create an effective educational environment in schools based on the use of songs. Additionally, the results of the current study may attract the attention of specialists and supervisors to the importance of this new strategy and conduct training courses for teachers on using

educational English songs in teaching English as a foreign and second language classes.

Study Questions

1. What are the English Language Teachers' Perceptions towards Using Educational Songs to Teach the New Vocabulary for First Intermediate Stage EFL Students?

Study Sample

The study sample consisted of 30 EFL male English language teachers from intermediate schools in Ramadi city. Their ages ranged between (37–38) years old and their teaching experience ranged between (15–16) years of experience in teaching English language. The study sample was randomly selected by obtaining their names and workplaces after contacting the General Directorate of Education and providing the researcher with their details. The researcher identified a group of teachers and later contacted them to obtain their consent to participate in the study.

Previous Studies

Andriyati, Kusrin, and Yanto, (2022) investigated the viewpoints of teachers on teaching vocabulary with songs. The researchers distributed a questionnaire among fifty teachers. They concluded that songs contributed greatly the way of acquiring new words.

Similarly, Widyastuti, and Saraswati, (2022) tended to reveal what the points of view of EFL teachers adopting songs to raise students' motivation to develop vocabulary learning. It was found that students gained many benefits by using songs. Songs helped them not only in gaining new words, but also, in it created a new way for acquiring, mastering, and practicing the language.

According Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) teachers welcomed the idea of utilizing songs for teaching English generally and for teaching vocabulary more specifically. The researchers could conclude that using songs was

very attractive and useful. Teachers expressed their agreements to use songs in English learning or/and teaching. As songs created healthy environments for students to learn and to practice what they learnt. Besides, songs helped students memorizing the new words very quickly.

Data Collection Tool

The tool used to collect data was a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research method consisting of a series of questions designed to gather information from a selected group of people. The English questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and was implemented in four different schools. To create this questionnaire, the researcher adapted a questionnaire and modified it to suit the objectives of the study. It was adapted from the study of (Sevik, 2011). It consisted of seventeen questions. The questionnaire included five points and five options Likert scale: "strongly agree", "agree", "neutral", "disagree", "strongly disagree".

Data Collection Procedures

To collect data, the researcher first obtained permission from the Anbar Directorate of Education to conduct the study and obtain the required data. Afterward, permission was obtained from the participants who agreed to participate in the study. The researcher selected teachers teaching English as a foreign language only from the intermediate level. After that, the questionnaire was sent to the participants in order to answer it. After completing the answers, the questionnaire was received from the participants

Results

What are the English Language Teachers' Perceptions towards Using Educational Songs to Teach the New Vocabulary for First Intermediate Stage EFL Students?

As shown in Table 1, teachers believe that songs increase students' enjoyment in learning English language (92.6%) total response strongly agree and agree with a mean of (4.63). Teachers believe that students

learn a lot of vocabulary when they listen repeatedly to English songs (98.6%) total response strongly agree and agree with a mean of (4.93). Teachers believe that songs accelerate vocabulary retention (89.4%) total response strongly agree and agree with a mean of (4.47). In addition, teachers believe that songs enhance students' motivation towards learning English language (83.4%) total response strongly agree and agree with a mean of (4.17). Teachers also believe that songs help create a comfortable fear-free environment (88%) total response strongly agree and agree with a mean of (4.4).

Teachers believe that songs increase students' participation in classroom activities to a wider extent (96.6% total agreement, very agreeable with an average of 4.83). 89.4% of teachers agreed that songs reduce students' anxiety towards learning English. The total agreement and agreeable average for this statement were 4.47. 17 teachers strongly agreed, and 8 agreed (84%) that it is easy for students to learn new vocabulary using educational songs, with an average of 4.2.

Twenty-five teachers, with 11 strongly agreeing and 15 agreeing, believed that songs provide learners with opportunities to practice vocabulary regularly by 82% on average. 83.4% of teachers believe that songs create a useful context for learners to acquire vocabulary, achieving an average score of 4.17. 90.6% of teachers believe that songs facilitate the memorization and recall of vocabulary for students, with an average score of 4.53. 81.4% of teachers consider songs as a valuable educational tool for learning English vocabulary, achieving an average score of 4.07.

Twenty-three teachers (88.6%) stated, "Songs help students understanding the second language culture," with an average score of 4.43. Teachers believed that students listening and speaking improvements were due to the songs, with 18 strongly agreeing and 8

agreeing at 89.4% on average. Regarding the use of songs to practice and develop the four skills, 29 teachers strongly agreed with a percentage of 99.4% and an average score of 4.97. Twenty-six teachers (82.6%) agreed that songs help in language acquisition, with an average score of 4.13. 28 teachers (91.4%) agreed that songs could be used to explain and discuss topics and give instructions, with an average score of 4.57. Interestingly, almost all participants recognized the educational value of songs in teaching English vocabulary to learners.

Table 1: Teachers' perception towards the educational value of songs in teaching new vocabulary to English language learners as a foreign language.

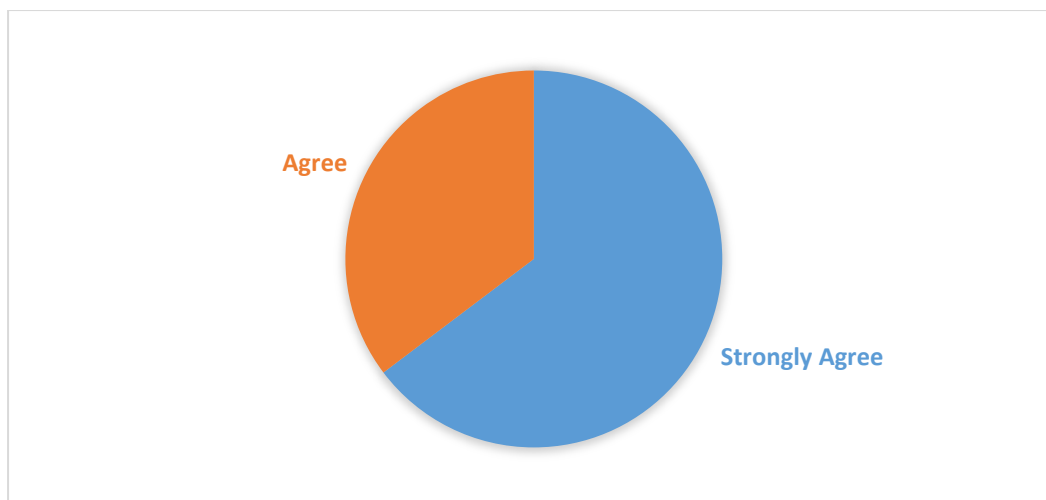
Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagree	sample	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	direction
1. Songs increase students' enjoyment in learning the English language.	24	4	0	1	1	30	4.63	0.91	%92.6	Strongly Agree
2. Students learn a lot of vocabulary when they listen to English songs repeatedly.	28	2	0	0	0	30	4.93	0.25	%98.6	Strongly Agree
3. I think that songs make the memorize of new vocabulary more easier and faster	19	7	3	1	0	30	4.47	0.81	%89.4	Strongly Agree
4. Songs improve students' motivation towards learning the English language.	22	1	1	2	4	30	4.17	1.49	%83.4	Agree
5. Songs help create a comfortable environment free from fear.	18	9	1	1	1	30	4.4	0.95	%88	Strongly Agree
6. I believe songs increase students' opportunities to participate in class activities more widely.	26	3	1	0	0	30	4.83	0.45	%96.6	Strongly Agree
7. Songs reduce students'	20	5	4	1	0	30	4.47	0.85	%89	Strongly

anxiety towards learning the English language.									.4	Agree
8. It is easy for students to learn new vocabulary using educational songs.	17	8	1	2	2	30	4.2	1.19	%84	Strongly Agree
9. I think songs provide learners with opportunities to practice vocabulary regularly.	11	1 5	1	2	1	30	4.1	0.98	%82	Agree
10. I believe songs create a useful context for learners to acquire vocabulary.	19	5	2	0	4	30	4.17	1.37	%83 .4	Agree
11. I believe songs facilitate students' memorization and recall of vocabulary.	23	3	2	1	1	30	4.53	0.99	%90 .6	Strongly Agree
12. Songs are a valuable educational tool for learning English vocabulary.	10	1 4	5	0	1	30	4.07	0.89	%81 .4	Agree
13. Songs help students understanding the second language culture	23	1	3	2	1	30	4.43	1.12	%88 .6	Strongly Agree
14. Listening and speaking improvements was because of using Songs.	18	8	4	0	0	30	4.47	0.72	%89 .4	Strongly Agree
15. The four skills can be practiced using Songs	29	1	0	0	0	30	4.97	0.18	%99 .4	Strongly Agree
16. Songs help in language acquisition.	8	1 9	2	1	0	30	4.13	0.67	%82 .6	Agree
17. Songs can be used to clarify and discuss topics and give instructions on them.	19	9	2	0	0	30	4.57	0.62	%91 .4	Strongly Agree

Table (2) shows the arithmetic mean, percentage, and overall trend of the sample.

Average overall	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Sample Orientation
As a Whole	4.44	%88.8	0.96	Strongly agree

Chart (1) comparing the percentages of responses very agree and agree.



Results Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate English language teachers' perceptions regarding applying songs to EFL students vocabulary. It was found that teachers have positive perceptions of using songs to enhance students' vocabulary.

It is found that the experimental students learned with motivation during using songs. In other words, songs changed the way the students depend on to develop their vocabulary. What is obtained from the current study is in line with the study of Andriyati, Kusrin, and Yanto (2022) which supported the claim that songs can create a good and comfortable way for learning new words of the target language.

Remembering or recalling words is not easy for EFL learners, thus, students need an effective way in which they can memorize words and can recall words when necessary. Therefore, results obtained after analyzing the questionnaire showed that songs have unlimited number of benefits that help students to study, memorize, recall, and practice vocabulary anytime they need to use the new words. This is identical completely with what Widyastuti and Saraswatis' (2022) revealed. They emphasized that vocabulary cannot be learned through traditional ways. Instead, there must be an effective way for teaching and learning vocabulary. Actually, songs improved to be the best method for teaching

new words as songs supply a healthy atmosphere for students to study and enable them study comfortably.

Conclusion

Based on the results, English language teachers found that educational English songs helped them in learning new English vocabulary, developed their language skills, and enhanced memorizing new vocabulary for use in oral or written dialogues.

It can be concluded, the new innovative method, which proposed by the researcher to teach vocabulary to EFL students was effective and helped the students learn a lot of vocabulary easily and without pressure, as most of the time the students learned with great motivation and passion for learning and without hesitation, anxiety, or shyness. This indicates the positive effectiveness of this method on increasing the amount of vocabulary that EFL students should learn.

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