The relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy

Introduction

Music, a universal language, has long played a crucial role in language learning. Among the various forms of music, song lyrics have been shown to engage listeners in ways that promote language acquisition more effectively than traditional methods (Ludke, 2009). In the context of learning English as a second language, exposure to English song lyrics can be a particularly potent tool for enhancing linguistic skills, especially pronunciation accuracy.

Pronunciation accuracy is a critical component of language proficiency as it affects both comprehension and communication (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Pronunciation difficulties are often cited as major obstacles by English language learners and can impede their ability to effectively convey their intended messages (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Consequently, innovative methods to improve pronunciation are of paramount importance in language education.

One such innovative method involves the use of song lyrics. According to Besson et al. (2011), music and language share neural resources in the brain, suggesting that musical training can enhance language processing and pronunciation accuracy. When learners listen to and sing along with English songs, they naturally practice the rhythmic and phonetic aspects of the language in an enjoyable and engaging manner (Ludke et al.,2014). This incidental learning process not only improves pronunciation but also enhances memory retention of new vocabulary and phrases.

Various studies highlight the benefits of using song lyrics in language learning. For instance, Engh (2013) found that integrating music in ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction significantly improved learners' pronunciation, listening skills, and overall language competence. Furthermore, Schön et al. (2008) demonstrated that participants who learned a

foreign language through songs outperformed those who used traditional methods in terms of pronunciation accuracy and recall.

Despite these findings, the specific relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy remains underexplored. There is a need for comprehensive research to understand how consistently listening to and engaging with English songs can systematically improve pronunciation accuracy among learners of various age groups and proficiency levels.

The purpose of this proposal is to investigate the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy. By focusing on this relationship, the study aims to provide empirical evidence supporting the use of music as an effective tool in language learning and to develop practical guidelines for educators to incorporate music into their teaching strategies.

Statement of the problem

Now that pronunciation is considered one of the most important and vital skills in teaching English, and at the same time, most learners and people face problems in this skill, the gap in pronunciation education creates important challenges for language learners and affects their ability to Effective communication has an impact in real environments.

The research suggests that incorporating music, specifically English song lyrics, into language learning can be an effective strategy for improving pronunciation accuracy. Music and language processing share cognitive and neural pathways, which allows rhythm and melody to facilitate language learning (Gordon et al.,2015).

A study by Farmand and Pourgharib (2013) demonstrated that learners who frequently listened to English songs showed significant improvement in their pronunciation skills. Similarly, Kusnandar and Nurhasanah (2020) found that students who engaged with English songs developed better phonetic awareness and articulation. Yet, despite these promising findings,

the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and enhancement in pronunciation accuracy remains underexplored.

Existing study like that by Ghanbari and Hashemian (2014) provide initial insights but do not comprehensively address how consistent and structured exposure to English songs may systematically improve pronunciation accuracy. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence on how different variables such as the frequency of exposure, the type of songs, and individual learner differences impact this relationship.

This study aims to address the research gap by investigating the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether and to what extent listening to English song lyrics can predict improvements in pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners. The findings of this research could inform language teaching practices and highlight the potential of integrating musical elements into language education to support pronunciation development.

Significance of the study

This study aims to explore the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy. Understanding this relationship holds significant educational implications for language learning and pedagogy. By investigating how listening to English songs impacts pronunciation, the study could provide evidence-based strategies to enhance language acquisition. Educators might integrate music more effectively into their teaching practices to improve learners' pronunciation skills. Incorporating music into language learning can increase student engagement and motivation. This study can highlight the motivational benefits of using English songs, potentially leading to more dynamic and enjoyable language learning environments. For language learners, understanding the benefits of listening to English songs can offer a practical, enjoyable, and accessible method to improve their

pronunciation outside of traditional classroom settings. Exposure to English songs also offers learners insights into cultural contexts, idiomatic expressions, and contemporary language usage, which are crucial for achieving fluency and cultural competence. The findings from this study can inspire innovative pedagogical tools and resources that incorporate music, thereby enriching the curriculum and providing diverse learning experiences. study contributes to the broader field of linguistic research by examining how auditory input from songs influences phonetic development, providing a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes involved in language learning.

Theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical framework for examining the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy is grounded in theories of second language acquisition, phonological development, and cognitive linguistics. This framework draws upon established research paradigms and empirical studies to elucidate the potential impact of musical exposure on language learning outcomes. Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis posits that language learners acquire a second language (L2) more effectively when they are exposed to "comprehensible input" that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level (i+1). Songs, which often incorporate repetitive and memorable language, provide rich comprehensible input that can facilitate phonological acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Baddeley's model of working memory includes the phonological loop, which plays a crucial role in acquiring new vocabulary and phonological structures. Exposure to song lyrics, which combines auditory and sometimes visual stimuli, can enhance the retention and recall of phonetic patterns through repeated listening and interaction (Baddeley, 2000). Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning suggests that learners understand and retain information better when it is presented through multiple sensory modalities. In the context of language learning, listening to music

with lyrics allows learners to process language through both auditory and, possibly, visual input, thereby enhancing pronunciation accuracy (Mayer, 2002).

Objectives of the study

The current study aims to examine the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners. The first objective is to investigate the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners. The second objective is the role of exposure to English song lyrics in predicting pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners will be examined.

Research questions

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners?

RQ2: Can exposure to English song lyrics predict pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners?

Research hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners.

H2: Exposure to English song lyrics can predict pronunciation accuracy of EFL learners.

Definitions of key terms

Exposure to English Song Lyrics

Exposure to English song lyrics refers to the extent and frequency with which individuals engage with the lyrical content of English songs. This includes listening to, reading, and potentially singing the lyrics, which facilitates language input in a multimodal format (Mora, 2000).

Pronunciation Accuracy

Pronunciation accuracy is defined as the degree to which a learner's spoken words, sentences, and phrases align with the phonetic norms and prosodic features (stress, intonation) of a native speaker of the target language. High pronunciation accuracy ensures clearer and more comprehensible speech (Derwing et al., 1998).

Limitations and delimitations

Limitations

The study involves a relatively small sample size of 50 EFL learners. This limited sample size may not be representative of the broader population of EFL learners, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. As a result, conclusions drawn from this study might not be applicable to all EFL learners, especially those from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. The use of convenience sampling for participant selection introduces potential biases, as the sample may not accurately reflect the diversity found within the larger population of EFL learners. This non-randomized sampling method may lead to skewed results and limit the study's external validity.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to intermediate EFL learners. All participants are native Persian speakers. This allows the study to focus on a specific learner demographic, ensuring that the findings are relevant to this group. The research adopts a quantitative correlational design, which is suitable for exploring the relationship between exposure to English song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy. This design choice is deliberate to establish potential predictive relations rather than causation.

The study will not consider a range of English song genres to encompass diverse linguistic and phonetic features.

Literature review

The increasing popularity of English music globally has led to greater exposure to English song lyrics, which could potentially impact non-native speakers' language acquisition, particularly pronunciation accuracy. This review examines the existing literature on this relationship.

The review will cover theoretical backgrounds, the impact of exposure to lyrics, pronunciation accuracy and future research directions.

Theoretical Background

This seminal work by Stephen Krashen introduces several key hypotheses related to second language acquisition, including the Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input. According to Krashen, language learners acquire a new language most effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of understanding but made comprehensible with context and cues. This theory provides a basis for understanding how listening to English song lyrics could serve as a form of comprehensible input that aids in phonological and phonetic learning (Krashen, 1982).

Gardner's work focuses on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that emotional factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence can significantly impact language acquisition. He argues that a lowered affective filter enhances language learning by allowing more input to be processed. Favorite songs can be highly motivating for learners, potentially lowering their affective filter and making it easier for them to internalize pronunciation patterns (Gardner, 1985).

Flege discusses the complexities of learning the phonetic and phonological aspects of a second language. He highlights the importance of ample exposure and practice in acquiring accurate pronunciation, noting that phonetic training can help learners discern and produce sounds more accurately. This theory supports the idea that listening to music can offer the repeated exposure necessary for phonetic learning (Fleg, 1995).

Mayer's theory of multimedia learning examines how different modes of input (auditory, visual, textual) can work together to enhance understanding and retention. According to Mayer, when learners receive information through multiple channels, it facilitates more effective learning. Applying this to language learning through music, the combination of auditory input (music) and textual input (lyrics) can help reinforce phonological learning (Mayer, 2002).

Exposure to English Song Lyrics

Music engages similar cognitive and neural pathways as language, aiding memory retention and language processing. Besson et al. (2011) highlighted that musical training can enhance linguistic abilities, particularly pronunciation, by improving attention and memory. Dewi et al. (2020) found that students who regularly listened to English songs exhibited significant improvements in their pronunciation abilities. The rhythmic and melodic elements of song lyrics help learners internalize pronunciation patterns and enhance their phonetic skills. Ludke et al. (2014) demonstrated that singing can facilitate foreign language learning by promoting more natural pronunciation patterns and enhancing memory retention. Their study underscores the pedagogical benefits of integrating music into language instruction. Salcedo (2010) explored the effects of songs on text recall and involuntary mental rehearsal. The study found that learners who engaged with songs demonstrated better memory retention, which in turn supported pronunciation accuracy, suggesting songs function as effective mnemonic devices. Good et al. (2015) examined the efficacy of singing in foreign-language learning and

discovered that music-based activities significantly enhanced learners' listening skills and pronunciation accuracy. Farmand and Pourgharib (2013) demonstrated that learners who frequently listened to English songs showed significant improvement in pronunciation skills. This study provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of songs as supplementary tools in language instruction. Hashemian (2014) investigated the effects of English songs on young learners, finding that musical activities significantly improved both listening comprehension and pronunciation. The study highlights the practical benefits of using music to create engaging and effective learning environments. Kaswari (2023) explored how English song lyrics serve as cultural and linguistic gateways, enhancing learners' pronunciation by providing exposure to authentic language use. This study provides insights into the integration of cultural elements in language instruction through music. Tusino (2020) investigated the effects of repeated exposure to English songs on phonetic accuracy. The study found that consistent listening to English songs helped learners internalize phonetic patterns and improve their pronunciation.

Medina explored the effects of music on vocabulary acquisition in a second language. Her findings indicate that students exposed to songs learn new words and phrases more effectively than those who learn through traditional methods. The repetitive and engaging nature of songs is highlighted as a key factor in aiding memory retention and language learning (Medina, 1993).

Pronunciation Accuracy

One study explored the role of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in enhancing pronunciation accuracy for second language (L2) learners. This research examined various AI technologies, including speech recognition systems, automated pronunciation feedback systems, and AI-driven language learning applications, to assess their impact on pronunciation training.

The findings revealed that AI tools significantly improve pronunciation accuracy by providing immediate and precise feedback, engaging learners through interactive practice, and offering scalable solutions for large user groups. Additionally, the study highlighted that integrating AI tools with traditional teaching methods—where instructors provide context and social interaction—yields the best outcomes. The research underscored the potential of AI to revolutionize pronunciation training in educational settings and recommends further exploration into the long-term effects of AI-assisted learning and the development of advanced, adaptive AI systems (Fatima, 2024).

Another study investigated the comparative efficacy of different instructional methods on second language (L2) pronunciation accuracy. Specifically, it examined the impact of perception-based versus production-based instructional approaches on learners' pronunciation outcomes. The findings indicated that while both methods contribute positively to pronunciation improvement, production-based instruction yields significantly better results in terms of both segmental and suprasegmental features. Additionally, the integration of multimedia resources and interactive exercises within these instructional approaches further enhanced pronunciation accuracy. The study highlighted the importance of incorporating dynamic and varied instructional techniques to optimize pronunciation training in language learning curricula (Alghazo et al., 2023).

Mora et al. (2024) explored the impact of speaking anxiety and task complexity on the pronunciation accuracy of second language (L2) learners. The findings indicated that higher levels of speaking anxiety are significantly associated with lower pronunciation accuracy. Additionally, the complexity of the tasks further exacerbated the negative effects of anxiety on pronunciation. The study highlighted the need for language educators to create supportive learning environments that mitigate anxiety and to design tasks that gradually increase in complexity to foster better pronunciation outcomes.

Future Research Directions

Lightbown and Spada advocated for the need for more longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of music exposure on pronunciation accuracy. They highlighted the importance of tracking language learners over extended periods to assess the sustainability of pronunciation improvements facilitated by song lyrics (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Mackey and Gass (2015) emphasized the necessity for more controlled experimental designs in research. They discuss how carefully designed experiments can help isolate the effects of different types of exposure—like music—from other variables, providing clearer insights into the causal relationship between song lyrics and pronunciation accuracy. Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) proposed comparing the effectiveness of music for pronunciation learning across different cultural backgrounds. Their research suggested that cultural differences can influence how learners engage with music and language, pointing to the need for comparative studies that examine these cross-cultural dynamics.

Method

Participants

A total 50 EFL learners intermediate from 3 language institutes in Gorgan, are selected as the sample of this study. The participants are female and male learners (age between 18- 25) and all of them are Persian native speakers. For eligibility of the participants, Oxford placement test will be used and the participants will be selected on convenience sampling.

Design of the study

The research design for this study is a quantitative correlational method.

Instrumentation

1.Oxford placement test (OPT): Using the Oxford Placement Test to ensure all participants are at an intermediate level of English proficiency.

2. Exposure to English Song Lyrics Questionnaire: Self-reported questionnaire on exposure to English song lyrics. This can be done online or on paper.

3. Pronunciation Test: Utilizing software such as PRAAT, Audacity or ASR for objective analysis of pronunciation accuracy.

Data collection and analysis procedures

Firstly, the participants with the above-mentioned characteristics will be selected based on convenience sampling. The main data for this research are gathered through questionnaire and a test. The research instruments will be given to participants to investigate their exposure to English song lyrics and their pronunciation accuracy the allotted time.

After collecting the data, the descriptive statistics including means, and standard deviations of the participants' scores on the questionnaires and test are calculated (via the last version of SPSS). Next, the Pearson correlation is run to answer the first research question. Finally, the second question will be answered by analyzing the data via linear regression.

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