



## Developing listening skills for high school students through songs: An empirical study

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### Abstract

The current study concentrates on listening, one of the four basic language skills. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, listening is frequently overlooked, and students almost tend to struggle to learn through it. This study's objective is to evaluate the effects of songs on students' listening skills and motivation. The participants included two groups of 11th grade students from a high school in Binh Duong province of Viet Nam, who learned English as a foreign language. Questionnaires and interviews were utilized to acquire both quantitative and qualitative data. A pre-test and a post-test were also prepared to assess both how far the students progressed after implementing the study project and their motivation in learning English through songs. At the end of the treatment, the average post-test score was greater than the pre-test score within experimental group. Research results indicate that music and songs may not only be entertaining, but also give students several benefits, a specially in developing their listening skills. Students' motivation in their language learning in general and in learning listening skills also increased considerably.

**Keywords:** High school students, Listening skills, Motivation, Songs.

### 1. Introduction

English is a universal language that is used in almost all countries and is a foreign language that is used as the language of instruction for international communication. Listening is one of the essential language skills and a component of communication since it allows us to communicate our thoughts with others. In [Brown's \(2001\)](#) view, listening is a major component in language teaching and learning because in the classroom, learners do more listening than speaking. Listening is also an important part of daily life communication.

Although students are aware that listening comprehension is difficult to master, they frequently disregard it. The ability to comprehend the meaning of what is heard is known as listening ability. In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Vietnam, it is often wondered why the majority of undergraduate students are unable to listen to English precisely, particularly in real-life settings with international speakers. Before enrolling in a university or college, the majority of Vietnamese undergraduate students have studied English for about 7 to 10 years.

At present, Vietnamese students in general and students at Tran Van On High school in particular study English as a compulsory subject. They mainly concentrate on grammar, reading and writing, which do not cover the full of English language skills. Students' proficiency level is generally not equal, so they are almost unable to learn effectively. As these students lack confidence when listening to English, problems in learning and developing English listening skills among these students are inevitable.

[Harmer \(2002\)](#) states that music is a great stimulant for students' involvement exactly because it speaks directly to our emotions while also enabling to us to utilize our minds. [Bricault](#), a professor at North Park College in Chicago, Illinois, and [William Bickerdike](#), a professor at the British Council in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, both recommended utilizing songs to help teach listening in the classroom ([Nunan & Miller, 1995](#)). Their goal is to make it interesting for students to listen in class. Despite the fact that the songs are long and the singer's speaking ability varies, students may still enjoy the songs they are familiar with. Songs are able to inspire students to pay attention while also improving their listening abilities. Students will listen attentively and cheerfully since they are hearing something familiar from their daily lives. Creative instructors or teachers may also utilize songs to teach English. Learning and teaching through songs is inevitably one of the effective approaches in language education. Teachers also benefit from employing songs in their teaching and learning activities. Through songs, teachers can teach students vocabulary, language, culture, social habits, and other aspects of the language. Students are seemingly pleased since they are learning something new. They should not always listen to their teacher's voice, which may be limited or even uninteresting.

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the roles of songs in enhancing listening skills and developing learning motivation of eleventh-grade EFL students at a high school in Binh Duong province, Viet Nam. To achieve this aim, the study employed songs as non-traditional teaching materials to teach these students. To guide the research, the following questions and hypothesis are put forward:

*Research questions: (i) How could the usage of songs enhance listening skills for high school students? (ii) How will the usage of songs affect students' motivation for learning English?*

*Hypotheses: (i) Participants in the experimental group and the control group have similar listening skills and pre-test results; (ii) Participants in the experimental group do better on the post-test than on the pre-test; (iii) Participants in experimental group are motivated to learn English through songs.*

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Theoretical Background*

#### *2.1.1. Listening Skill*

There are several definitions of listening. Listening, in [Howatt & Dakin's \(1974\)](#) study, is the ability to recognize and comprehend what others are saying. It's a procedure that entails comprehending the speaker's accent or pronunciation, as well as the speaker's grammar and vocabulary. In the view of [Carter & Nunan \(2001\)](#), listening entails not just identifying sounds but also comprehending their meanings, and students must understand the role of the sentence when it is used in real-life communication. Listening is defined by [Ika \(2003\)](#) as the process through which spoken language is translated to meaning in the mind.

[Mukmiatun \(2009\)](#) believes that listening is a mental activity that is difficult to define since it is undetectable. As listening is a receptive skill, listeners must be able to differentiate between sounds, comprehend language and grammatical structures, and interpret this information both in the immediate and wider socio-cultural settings of the speech.

[Keihaniyan \(2013\)](#) states that listening requires complicated interpretative processes in face-to-face interactions. To identify the meaning of a communication, a sophisticated network of environmental circumstances interacts. When processing meaning, filling in gaps and synthesizing what is heard with existing knowledge are important. When communicating in a foreign language, this multifaceted processing becomes more difficult. The many cognitive and external contextual elements that impact reception, interpretation, and response creation are impossible to account for in theoretical models that aim to reflect the intricate structure of the listening process.

In language instruction, the phrase "listening" refers to a multi-step process that allows us to comprehend spoken language. The foundation for improving various skills in foreign language acquisition is a good listening comprehension ability. It is, however, the most difficult of all language skills for a beginner to acquire. When listening to a native speaker, a foreign language student may struggle to grasp or record his or her words ([Shen, 2009](#)). Misunderstandings occur as a result of poor pronunciation. Listening should be the primary focus of foreign language instruction. A student should listen first, much like a real kid, who initially learns to listen to his or her parents before attempting to talk.

In reality, language acquisition occurs mostly via hearing, and students who are good listeners are also good learners. Language learning requires good listening abilities. Listening is the receptive use of language, and as its purpose is to make sense of speech, the attention is on meaning rather than language ([Cameron, 2001](#)). Listening is how spoken language becomes input for students ([Sevik, 2012](#)). As a result, listening is the initial step of learning a new language, which occurs in the classroom via listening to the teacher, real materials, or other students.

#### *2.1.2. Music And Songs in Language Teaching and Learning*

It is difficult to define a single definition of music since the notion of this phenomenon is very subjective and can vary from place to place, from time to time, and even from person to person, depending on their mood.

Music, as defined by [Martin \(2013\)](#), is the structuring of sound and silence into forms that contain culturally given meanings and everything one listens to with the aim of listening to music. Music shapes emotions, altering perceptions and moves sentiments. When it comes to the benefits of music, [Harmer \(2002, p. 139\)](#) stated "Music is a powerful stimulus for students' engagement precisely because it speaks directly to our emotion while still allowing us to use our brain to analyze it and its effects if we so wish". As a form of amusement and entertainment, music can make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning. [Degrave \(2019\)](#) explains music may help in foreign language acquisition in a variety of ways, including particular linguistic abilities (such as vocabulary, listening skills, or pronunciation) as well as more general characteristics such as motivation or attention.

A song is considered a poem that is set to music ([Oxford, 1995, p. 395](#)). It is a short musical work set to a poetic text with equal give important to music and to the words ([Encyclopedia, 1977, p. 220](#)). A song writes for one or several voices and is generally performed with instrument accompaniment. As such, a song is a group of beautiful words which conveys the feelings of other people and are presented with beautiful music. Songs, in particular, serve this job well since the lyrics give music meaning. This is incredibly pertinent and advantageous to language acquisition. Songs are generally self-contained recordings, texts, and videos that may be used in a classroom setting As one of authentic materials that teaches for variety of purposes e.g. listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, etc., a song is considered as an excellent teaching tool that can engage, excite and motivate students in their language learning.

As a form of music, a song may be an excellent language package, combining culture, vocabulary, listening, grammar, and a variety of other language abilities in only a few syllables. Songs may be used to introduce informal language and diverse dialects. It can also give a casual lessons, serving as the foundation for many more classes. The supply of songs is nearly endless, and there is a diverse choice of titles and genres to pick from.

#### *2.1.2.1. Vocabulary*

[De Groot \(2006\)](#) investigates the impact of background music on word recall. Following L1-L2 word pairings, several vocabulary recall tests are administered. Compared to the silence condition, recall ratings for the musical

condition are greater. Legg (2009) studies the effect of song on text recall by having students participate in an active production in which they had to either rehearse and perform a musical rendition of a poem or answer questions and play memory games. The results reveal that students in the musical condition perform better on a translation assignment than students in the non-musical condition.

#### *2.1.2.2. Pronunciation*

Schoepp (2001) states there is a substantial link between rhythm and speech. Students are exposed to the rhythms of the language when music and songs are employed in the classroom. Popular songs contain several examples of colloquial speech. For example, the “-ing” ending is commonly shortened from the full “- ing” to merely a “n” sound. This is the natural and daily language of songs, as opposed to the artificial language found in many course books, and it is an excellent method to infuse living into the classroom.

#### *2.1.2.3. Grammar*

Songs may be utilized for both the presentation and practice of grammar courses. In a casual classroom setting, songs may foster long and deep listening as well as inspire creativity and use of imagination. When choosing a song, the instructor should take into consideration the learners’ age, interests, and the language utilized in the song. It is also important to allow learners to participate in the music choosing process to increase learner commitment. In terms of children's grammatical development, Martin (2000) claims there is ample evidence that, from the outset, infants can acquire and replicate big “chunks” of language in the shape of songs and other routines, even if they cannot understand and control them.

#### *2.1.2.4. Listening*

Listening to music, among other out-of-school activities, can increase learners’ self-efficacy (Sundqvist, 2009). Most learners will be intrigued to understand the lyrics, thus consistent practice may enhance prediction and comprehension abilities. Listeners may seek a mastery goal while studying the lyrics of songs they enjoy, since the desire to grasp what the song is about may deepen their interest in the lyrics.

#### *2.1.2.5. Motivation*

Motivation is essential for learning a foreign language. In the views of Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup's (2008) motivation can be defined as an internal state that arouses, guides, and maintains action. Such a state may be attained when a music listener becomes engaged in the meaning of the lyrics and digs deep into the song. As a result, adding songs and music to classrooms is an excellent way to make English courses more vibrant and encouraging. An increasing corpus of studies confirms that music may be used to teach languages (Schon, et al 2008). Singing is undoubtedly one of the activities that produces the most passion and is a pleasant and exciting approach to foreign people's culture (Ghanbari & Hashemian, 2014). As genuine materials are a motivational force for learners (Gilmore, 2007), music, which is an authentic activity, and songs that employ authentic texts and language of native speakers, can contribute to the motivating component (Mishan, 2005).

#### *2.1.2.6. Anxiety*

Listening to music can also help with foreign language anxieties. A sensation of uneasiness or apprehension when studying a foreign language has been related to poor foreign language performance. In a study investigating the effect of music on foreign language anxiety Dolean (2016) found out that that teaching through songs can help reduce foreign language anxiety, particularly in students with high levels of anxiety. Engh (2013) also claimed music decreases affective barriers and contributes in making students more calm, making them more responsive to language acquisition.

#### *2.1.2.7. Attention*

Music and songs can also help maintain attention. In their study, Wolfe & Noguchi (2009) discovered that students were more attentive, focused, and engaged when listening to a musical tale. Not only are songs enticing to children, but they are also engaging to teachers. Learning a foreign language through music and songs may be viewed as an informal way of teaching known as “edutainment”, which includes applications such as games, visual materials, and music. The concept primarily grabs learners' attention, maintains their emotional involvement, and keeps them engaged in the course. This is why using music and songs in the language classroom is engaging and delightful, as well as beneficial to the learning process (Okan, 2003).

### *2.2. Previous Studies*

There have been various studies with reference to the use of songs in English teaching and learning.

Sevik's (2011) conducted the study entitled “*Teacher views about using songs in teaching English to young learners*” with the aim to investigate the perspectives of Turkish state primary school EFL instructors on songs and their use in teaching English to young learners. A questionnaire was used to collect the opinions of 52 English language instructors. The findings showed that Turkish EFL teachers had strong convictions about the pedagogical worth of songs and the usefulness of employing songs in teaching EFL to young learners.

The study by Vera & Luna (2013) entitled “*Teaching English through music: A proposal of multimodal learning activities for primary school children*” explored the use of music and songs in the teaching of English as a second language to primary school children in Spain. The results showed that music enhances linguistic intelligence when multiple ways of learning were practiced in the classroom. Students’ communicative competence and learning autonomy were also improved as they were provided with strategies and techniques to continue learning out of school.

Jerabkova (2016) conducted the study entitled “*Using songs in English language teaching at lower secondary schools*” in the Czech Republic also proved that songs could be a very suitable tool in language learning and very useful in language acquisition. The researcher also pointed out the enjoyment appreciated by most of the students and the



motivation they got, which was simply much more effective than the motivation ordinary exercises in their textbooks could offer.

In 2020, Al-Smadi conducted the study entitled “*The effect of using songs on young English learners’ motivation in Jordan*”. The purpose of the study was to look at the usefulness of utilizing songs to motivate young students in Jordan. The participants were divided into two groups from a Jerash private school. Their motivation was explored both with and without the usage of music. A T-test analysis of the data suggested that employing songs in English education for young learners was considerably helpful in increasing their enthusiasm to learn the language.

In Viet Nam, Ngoc (2021) carried out a study entitled “*A study on improving listening comprehension for students at Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry*”. The objective of the study was to investigate the efficacy and perspectives of students at Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry on enhancing their listening comprehension skills through English songs. There was little doubt that hearing was crucial to students, and they regarded listening as both vital and challenging. Responses from the participants indicated that music might help students a lot in their learning process. These students also believed that every component of the music might be used to improve their listening skills.

The use of songs as a listening learning medium was a common theme in the five prior studies as mentioned above. Most of these studies only concentrated on primary and secondary school students, and there were very few studies investigating the use of songs to enhance listening skills for high school ones. As songs can be applicable to students of various ages and in various institutions, the current study is conducted to get further insight into the benefits of using songs in English language teaching and learning, especially in Vietnamese high school contexts, determining whether or not there are substantial differences in high school students’ listening abilities when utilizing songs.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Experimental research was used in this study with the aim to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, through the tools of questionnaires, tests and follow-up interviews to assess students’ listening ability and their motivation in working with songs in their language learning. As quoted by Arikunto (2013), an experimental study is one of the valuable approaches to evaluate the cause-and-effect of a treatment or phenomenon. In the current study, the writer used songs in listening classes for his students who were required to complete the listening skill tests, including a pre-test and a post-test.

The students were divided into two groups: a controlled group and an experimental group. The experimental group received various treatments over the course of five months. Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to evaluate students’ improvement in their listening skills. The scores of the students before and after the tests were also compared for analysis.

#### **3.2. Settings**

This study was done at a high school in Binh Duong province. The school was established in 2003 with only 7 classes and 330 students. Every year, the school receives around 1500 students. Most of the students at the school come from migrant worker families. As these students’ parents almost work at factories in industrial parks, they rarely care about their children’s study. For these students, learning English is considered as difficult and time-consuming things because most of them do not have many opportunities for practicing the language. They mostly focus on grammar, writing, or reading, which do not cover the totality of English language abilities. As students’ levels are not equal, they are almost anxious when listening to English and unable to learn it successfully. As a result, problems these students encounter during their English listening learning becomes unavoidable.

The survey was carried out over the period of five months during the second semester of the academic school year. Both groups of the participants took part in 20 lessons. In the current curriculum, English is taught in 4 periods, including 3 compulsory periods and 1 optional period, per week. The survey lasted 20 weeks in total and was taken place in the optional session. Each English lesson lasted 45 minutes. As the school used a block schedule, the lessons were often merged into a 90-minute block.

#### **3.3. Population**

In order to address the research questions and hypothesis, 80 students from two classes of eleventh grade were chosen as the research sample. These students’ proficiency level was almost the same, and they almost had difficulties in their listening to English although they almost had been studying English for at least 8 years (as stated by these students prior to the experiment). Purposive sampling was used to choose two classes for this study. Each class has forty students.

#### **3.4. Instruments**

In the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were utilized. The instruments employed included two questionnaires, two tests, and the songs used in the treatment.

Questionnaires that ask specific questions about aspects of the classroom, curriculum or teaching method are a quick and simple way of obtaining broad and rich information from student (Hopkins, 2008). The first questionnaire of the study consisted of two main parts. The first part (Personal information and experience) was designed to evaluate students’ English-language backgrounds, prior knowledge and experiences, musical backgrounds, challenges in learning English, preferred learning activities and techniques, and their perceived values of English both now and in the future. The second part (Pre-motivational survey) was aimed to measure students’ motivation and excitement for studying English. The questions in this part were designed in the form of scaled response ones. This type of response is structured by means of a series of gradations requiring participants to record their responses to a given statement by selecting one from a number of alternatives including “strongly agree,” “agree,” “undecided” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree”. The second questionnaire (Post-motivational survey) was designed to collect data related to students’ perception about the usage of songs in their English

listening learning. Each item included a list of 5 available alternatives or replies (also 5 Likert scale ones) from which respondents had to select one. This type of questions was believed to provide necessary information related to the research questions and objectives of the study.

Brown (2001) defines a test as a means of testing a person's skill, knowledge, or performance in a certain subject. Tests are useful instruments used to assess the students' progress at each stage of the research. There were two tests administered in the current study. The first test (Pre-test) was administered to gather data on students' knowledge, determining their capacity to learn to listen before they were taught with songs as a way to practice and develop their listening skill. The second test (Post-test) was administered following the implementation of the technique in the teaching and learning process to measure students' absorption of the content being studied. The results from this test were then compared to those from the previous one for analysis.

In the current study, songs were used to enhance students' listening skill. These are the US and UK songs of the 2010s, which were almost pop songs (Table 1). The reasons for the adoption of these songs were they are both current and composed of traditional tunes. These songs were written with the primary purpose of pleasing the audience and achieving economic success in their mind. Pop songs are believed to be among students' musical preference and trends. Through these songs, students not only gained knowledge of different language aspects (such as vocabulary, structures, pronunciation, intonation, tone, rhythm and pace) but also could broaden their knowledge of the cultural, historical, and social background associated to the sung texts.

Table 1. List of the songs used in the study.

Songs	Singers	Language aspects
1	La la la	Pronunciation
2	Timber	Comparison
3	Love yourself	Tenses
4	See you again	Tenses, vocabulary
5	Maps	Vocabulary, tenses, expressions, adjectives...
6	What makes you beautiful	Wish-clause, tenses
7	Let her go	Inversion, pronunciation
8	Sugar	Vocabulary
9	Roar	Tenses, pronunciation
10	Rolling in the deep	Gerund, vocabulary

### 3.5. Interviews

As suggested by Cohen et al. (2011), the interview questions were organized sequentially from general to more specialized, and this structure was determined by various factors, such as the aims of the interviews; the nature of the subject matter; the mixture of factual, opinionative, and attitudinal feedback; the participants' level of education; the specificity and depth anticipated of feedback; an evaluation of the participants' motivational level; and the amount of the researcher's own insight. The goal of the student interviews in the current study was to get deeper insight into students' language levels and their feedback on the usage of songs in the EFL listening classrooms. The interview consisted of five main questions, with the response time varying based on the length of individual student's answers. These questions are: (1) *Did you notice any progress in your listening skills or any other skills in your English language after applying the project?* (2) *Do you prefer learning within the curriculum tasks or with songs as an extra-activities?* (3) *Was it fun for you to learn with songs or did you learn something out of it?* (4) *What are some of these things?* (5) *Are you more motivated to learn English with songs?*

### 3.6. Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, data are classified into two categories: quantitative and qualitative.

In the current study, the quantitative statistical technique through the means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS® Version 20.0 for Windows) was utilized by to assess data gained through experimental instruction. For data analysis, the means, T-tests, standard deviations and percentages of the responses were taken into consideration.

*Means:* The mean is used to calculate the average score of the students in the experimental group and the control group.

$$x = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

in which: x: mean

$\Sigma x$ : sum of the scores

N: number of students

The mean ratings for EFL students' attitudes towards English learning activities are as follows: 1-1.80 for Strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60 for Disagree; 2.61-3.40 for Neither; 3.41- 4.20 for Agree; and 4.21-5.00 for Strongly agree.

*T-tests:* The paired sample the T-test is a parametric difference test on two paired data that compares whether or not there are differences between two groups in pairs, and the data originates from the same topic.

*Standard deviations:* The standard deviation is derived by dividing the deviated square.

*Percentages:* Percentage is calculated by taking the frequency in the category divided by the total number of participants and multiplying by 100%.

To obtain qualitative data, the interviews were held at Tran Van On high school, at an agreed-upon time, among 20 individuals from the experimental group, all of whom were chosen at random after school and parental agreement was secured. Conducted by the research group themselves, the interviews were carefully recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

### 3.7. Ethical Considerations

During the study period, several ethical criteria were implemented. This thesis was carried out honestly, without copying the results from other thesis or relevant papers. The related literature documents were cited correctly and referenced fully. Permission from the school leaders and students' parents are highly obtained as the objectives and outcomes of the study were clearly stated at the start. Students' dignity and well-being were also highly respected. The research data and results were kept anonymous.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Results From the First Questionnaire

##### 4.1.1.1. Personal Information and Experience

The first data collection approach was an English-language background survey for students. The goal of this survey was to look into relevant aspects of the participants (80 students), including their perception of the importance of English, their English-language backgrounds, prior knowledge and experiences, musical backgrounds, difficulties in learning English, preferred learning forms and methods. In response to the question about the importance of English, an overwhelming majority of the students (79 students, accounting for 98,8%) chose the option important or very important. This makes it easier for teachers to apply and carry different meaningful activities in their language classroom. In response to the question "How long have you been studying English?", the majority of the students (64 students, accounting for 80%) said that they had been learning English for eight years, eight students (10%) having studied English for 5 to 7 years, and the rest for less than 4 years. When asked about the most challenging language skill in their language learning, the majority of the students (36 students, accounting for 45%) said listening was the most difficult, while 19 students (23,8%) chose speaking, 18 students (22,5%) chose writing, and 7 students (8,8%) chose reading. With reference to which learning technique they are in favor of, the results collected were fascinating as the majority of the students (28 students, accounting for 35%) selected songs, 22 students (27.5%) showed their preference for movies, and 19 students (23.8%) for instructional games. Regarding musical tastes, pop music was favored by the majority of the students (57 students, accounting for 71,3%), while rock was preferred by 9 students (accounting for 11,3%). Unfortunately, country/folk was the least chosen genre (only 2 students, accounting for 2,5%), whereas classic was picked by 4 students (accounting for 5%).

##### 4.1.1.2. Pre-Motivational Experience

The next part of the questionnaire focused on pre-motivational factors related to the application of songs in English language classrooms. The results are present in the table that follows.

**Table 2.** Pre-motivational experience among the participants.

Items		Medians	
		Control group	Experimental group
1	I like learning English	3.5	3.2
2	I like English language classes	3.0	3.0
3	I like listening activities in my English class	2.3	2.5
4	I do my home-work regularly	2.8	2.8
5	I like learning English by with songs	4.0	4.0

In response to the question about students' preference for learning English (Item 1), both the control group and the experimental group had almost the same results, with the mean of 3.5 for the control group and 3.2 for the experimental group. These results indicate that most of the students at the school have some reference and intrinsic motivation for their English learning. The median of the responses to Item 2 was 3.00 for both groups, which means that most of the students have certain preference for their English language classes. The responses to Item 3 received the median of 2.3 for the control group and of 2.5 for the experimental group. These results indicate that the majority of students were not actually interested in listening activities in their English language learning. With the median of 2.8 for both groups, the results collected from Item 4 indicate that students almost did not want to do their homework, maybe because they felt it was not motivating. When it comes to students' interest on the use of songs in their language learning, in response to Item 5, both groups receives the median of 4.0. This value indicates that the use of songs can be considered a favourite activity or technique among these students.

### 4.2.2. Results From the Tests

#### 4.2.2.1. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results in the Control Group

The study conducted a pre-test and a post-test to assess students' general proficiency level in control group. These students were taught with traditional teaching methods in 20 weeks (without the use of songs). SPSS 20 was used to evaluate the scores obtained by the group.

**Table 3.** The statistics of pre-test and post-test scores in the control group.

		Pre-test	Post-test
N	Valid	40	40
	Missing	0	0
Mean		5.20	5.10
Median		5.00	5.00
Mode		5	5
Std. Deviation		1.436	1.549
Minimum		2	2
Maximum		8	8

Table 3 displays the distribution of the total pre-test and post-test scores. The mean for pre-test scores was 5.20, with the standard deviation of 1.436. Meanwhile, the mean for post-test scores was 5.10, with the standard deviation of 1.549. Surprisingly, the minimum and the maximum scores students obtained in both of these tests were exactly the same (2 for the pre-test and 8 for the post-test), with the same mode value of 5. As, there were no statistically significant differences between the scores students obtained in the two tests, it can be said that the control group had almost no improvement in their listening skills with the use of traditional teaching methods.

**Table 4.** The frequency of pre-test and post-test scores in the control group

Valid	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
2	1	2.5	2	5.0
3	4	10.0	4	10.0
4	8	20.0	7	17.5
5	10	25.0	13	32.5
6	8	20.0	6	15.0
7	8	20.0	5	12.5
8	1	2.5	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

The frequency of pre-test and post-test scores in the control group is fully described in Table 4. There was only one student (2,5%) got the score of 2 in the pre-test, whereas there were two students (5%) got this score in the post-test. Most students had the score of 5 (10 students, accounting for 25% in the pre-test and 13 students, accounting for 32,5% in the post-test). As a result, there was almost no significant change in students' scores in the control group.

**4.2.2.2. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results in The Experimental Group**

The statistics of pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group are displayed in the table that follows.

**Table 5.** The statistics of pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group

		Pre-test	Post-test
N	Valid	40	40
	Missing	0	0
Mean		5.15	6.10
Median		5.00	6.00
Mode		6	6
Std. deviation		1.511	1.317
Minimum		1	3
Maximum		8	9

As can be seen from Table 5, there is a slight difference in students' listening scores before and after songs were used in their listening lessons. The mean value of the pre-test scores was 5.15, with the standard deviation of 1.511. Meanwhile, the mean value of the post-test scores was 6.10, 0.95 higher than that of the pre-test, with the standard deviation of 1.317. Table 6 below shows more information about the statistics of the scores obtained by the students in the experimental group:

**Table 6.** The frequency of pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group.

Valid	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	1	2.5	0	0.0
2	2	5.0	0	0.0
3	2	5.0	1	2.5
4	5	12.5	5	12.5
5	12	30.0	4	10.0
6	13	32.5	15	37.5
7	3	7.5	10	25.0
8	2	5.0	4	10.0
9	0	0.0	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

Table 6 indicates the frequencies of pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group. Although the mode was 6 in both tests, there were statistically significant differences between the results from the two tests. In the pre-test, the minimum score was only 1 and the maximum one was 8, while in the post-test, these values were 3 and 9 respectively. After using songs in listening teaching and learning English at the school, the frequencies of the scores were changed considerably. There were up to 3 students (accounting for 7.5%) getting the score of 1 or 2 in the pre-test, while none of the students received these scores in the post-test. The number of students who obtained the score of five was more or less the same in the two tests, with 13 students (32.5%) in the pre-test and 15 students (37.5%) in the post-test. It was interesting to note that the number of students obtained the score of 8 increased from 2 students (5%) in the pre-test to 4 students (10%) in the post-test. 1 student received the score of 9 in the post-test while none of the students received this score in the pre-test. It can be concluded from these results that students' listening skills were improved significantly through the use of songs in their language classes.



2.2.2.3. Comparison of Post-Test Results in The Control and Experimental Group

As previously stated, students who participated in the study are divided into the experimental group and the control group. These two groups had more or less similar scores in the pre-test on listening, thus are supposed to have the same proficiency levels in listening comprehension. The mean scores the students obtained in the pre-test among the experimental group and the control group are 5.15 and 5.20 respectively (Figure 1).

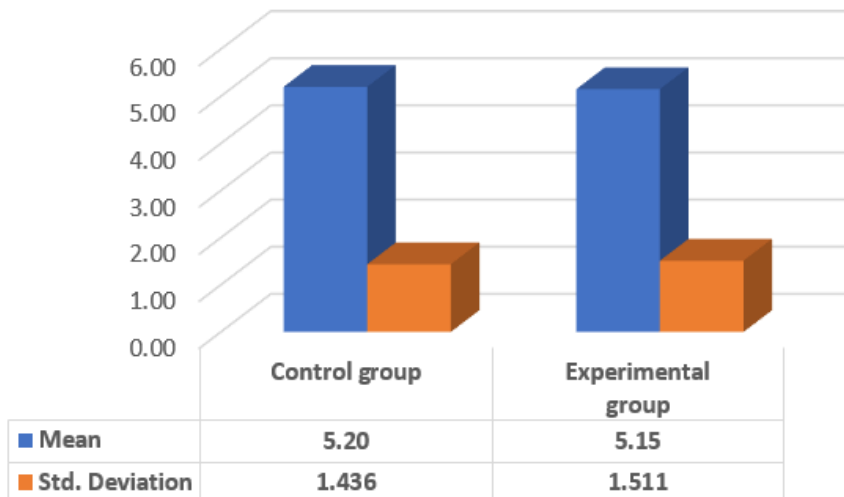


Figure 1. Pre-test scores among the control and experimental group

Although most of these students had been learning English for at least 8 years, the majority of them had low scores in the pre-tests. Listening was in fact perceived as the most difficult skill for these students, as it has been earlier stated by 45% of the students. For most of the time, they had just focused on grammar, reading or writing for end-of-school-year or graduation examinations, while listening was almost ignored as it was not included in these exams. After the treatment, the post-test was carried out, utilizing word equation format. Chart 2 below describes and compares the pre-test and post-test mean scores among the control and experimental group.

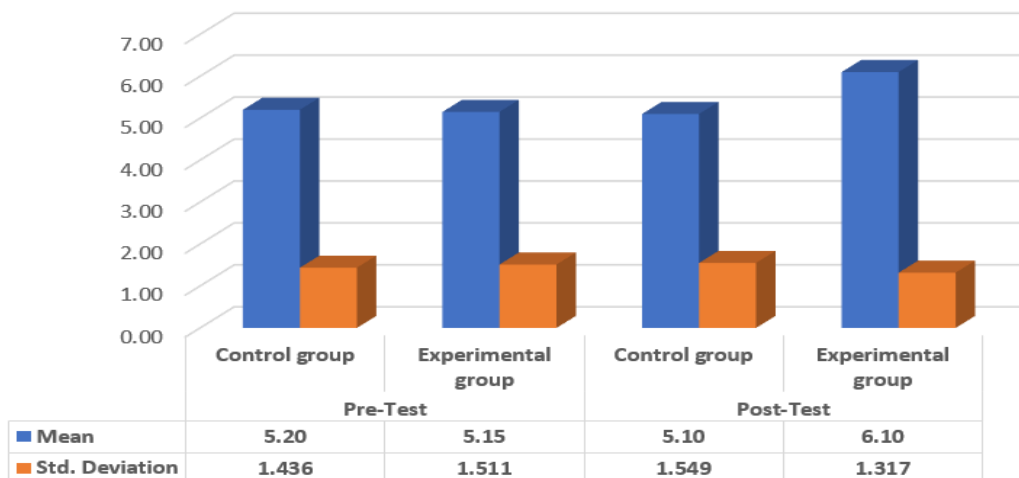


Figure 2. Comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores among the control and experimental group.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the means scores of the post-test results among the two groups are quite comparable. With the score ranges of 6.10±1.317 among the experimental group and 5.10±1.549 among the control group, it can be concluded that teaching English listening through songs is one of the effective methods to improve learners’ listening comprehension while also improving their motivation.

4.2.3. Results From the Second Questionnaire (Post-Motivational Survey)

To fulfill the objectives of the study, the results from the post-motivational survey were analysed in comparison with those from the pre-motivational survey. However, to evaluate the effects of the treatment on students’ motivation, only data related to the experimental group are taken into consideration. These results are comparatively presented in the Table 7 that follows.

Table 7. Post-motivational questionnaire results among the experimental group.

Items	Responses (N=40)										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I like learning English.	2	5	5	12.5	4	10	9	22.5	20	50
2	I like listening activities with songs in my English classes.	2	5	5	12.5	4	10	9	22.5	20	50
3	I voluntarily practice humming, whistling, or singing some of the songs after the class.	0	0	3	7.5	8	20	15	37.5	14	35
4	I do my homework regularly.	2	5	1	2.5	4	10	13	32.5	20	50
5	I like listening to English songs in my leisure time.	0	0	3	7.5	7	17.5	10	25	20	50
6	I think listening lessons with songs are more effective than the regular ones.	1	2.5	3	7.5	3	7.5	15	37.5	18	45

Note: (1=strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= undecided; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree).



When asked about students' interest in learning English (Item 1), 29 students (72.5%) chose "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree", 4 students (10%) chose "Neither", and 7 students (17.5%) chose "Agree" and "Strongly agree". When asked about whether the students liked listening activities with songs in their English classes (Item 2), the majority of them (29 students, accounting for 72.5%) selected "Strongly agree" or "Agree", while only 7 students (17.5%) chose "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree". When asked if they voluntarily practiced humming, whistling, or singing any of the songs after the class or not (Item 3), the majority of the students (29 students, accounting for 72.5%) selected "Strongly agree" or "Agree", only three students (7.5%) selected "Disagree", and none of them selected "Completely disagree". With reference to the regularity of doing their homework related to the use of songs in their listening learning (Item 4), the majority of the students (33 students, accounting for 82.5%) selected "Strongly agree" or "Agree", while only 3 students (7.5%) selected "Strongly disagree" or "Disagree". In response to the item about students' interest in listening to English songs in their leisure time (Item 5), 30 students (75%) selected "Agree", while only 3 students (7.5%) selected "Disagree", and none of them selected "Completely disagree". In response to Item 6, a number of students (33 students, accounting for 82.5%) selected "Strongly agree" or "Agree". Only four students (10%) selected "No" for this item.

**Table 8.** Medians of pre-motivational questionnaire and post-motivational questionnaire responses among the experimental group.

Questionnaires	I like learning English	I like listening activities in my English classes	I do my homework regularly
Pre- motivational questionnaire	3	2.5	3
Post-motivational questionnaire	4.5	4.5	4

Table 8 shows statistically significant differences between students' responses before and after songs are used in listening learning activities. With the higher mean scores of the items in the post-motivational survey, it can be revealed that students's motivation in learning English in general and in learning listening with songs in particular is enhanced within the experimental group compared to that of the control one. To illustrate, the item "I like listening activities with songs in my English classes" was used to evaluate student's awareness of listening activities with the application of songs in their language learning. The medians of the responses to this item were 2.5 and 4.5 respectively. As there was a statistically significant difference between these values, which increased by 2.0 points, students' attitude towards listening learning among the experimental group changed considerably. The responses to the item about the regularity of doing homework related to the use of songs (M=4) are also quite motivating compared to those collected from the pre-motivational questionnaire as presented in Table 1 (M=3). These results indicated that teaching listening with songs could help develop students' autonomy in their language learning in general and in developing their listening skills in particular.

**Table 9.** Descriptive statistics of the clusters related to students' perception of determining factors in choosing the songs to be taught.

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Melody	40	3	5	4.01	1.026
Language	40	2	5	3.88	0.809
Content	40	2	5	3.77	0.967
Singer	40	2	5	3.53	1.002

It could be revealed from Table 9 that most of the suggested factors should be considered in selecting the songs to be taught, among which melody is put with high priority in the list (with M=4.01; Std. Deviation=1.026). It is of no doubt that melody is considered the first and foremost important factor that motivates students to follow the songs they are listening to. Teachers, therefore, should realize these expectations from the students in order to adopt songs that are motivating and effective in developing their language skills in general and listening skills in particular.

#### 4.2.4. Results From the Interviews

To get further insight into the effects of songs on students' listening skills and their motivation, follow-up interviews were extended to 10 students randomly selected from the poll of 40 students who had received the treatment and completed the survey questionnaire.

In response to the first question "Did you notice any progress in your listening skills or any other skills in your English language after applying the project?" (Question 1), 9 out of 10 students showed their agreement upon the idea that they had certain progress in listening skills after the treatment with songs in their listening classes. Some of the notable remarks was: "...Listening to songs, I can train my ear to English sounds, as a result, my listening skills is improved greatly...", "...I can understand more of what is spoken through practicing listening to songs in English...", "...My listening skill is improved a lot as I have more chance to practice listening to different sounds...". These students also stated that their speaking skill could be improved as well: "...Before the implementation of songs in my listening classes, I encountered a lot of problems in using English, but later I could manage it better...", "...Through listening to various songs, I feel more confident in speaking English, because I have more vocabulary and know more structures to express myself..."

When asked about whether these students preferred learning within the curriculum tasks or with songs as an extra activities, as stated in Question 2, the responses are quite surprising as most of the students chose the latter. Notably, one of the students emphasized the significance of learning through songs as well as the different effects in the learning outcomes between the use of songs and book-based learning tools in their language learning. She further claimed that when she was working with songs, she not only heard what was being spoken but also was able to learn how to pronounce it. Some students confessed they sometimes used the new vocabulary learned in the class and expanded their English activities by various ways, such as making comments on YouTube videos. Some other students stated their preference for writing as in "Writing is more enjoyable to me as I can revise what I have written with these activities."

With regard to students' experience with songs in response to the questions "Was it only fun for you to learn with songs or did you learn something out of it?" (Question 3), and "What are some of these things?" (Question 4), the results received were quite interesting as students' positive attitude was noted. Some of the extracts from their responses were: "...Learning with songs is quite entertaining and we are able to quickly comprehend texts...", "...It is fun and I can learn a lot from listening to songs...", "...With songs, I can notice more of what is being said...", "...With songs, I can new language that I haven't known before, and I now can use it effectively and naturally...", "...Through songs, I can grasp the meaning of phrases that I have not known before...". Pronunciation was also a topic of discussion as 3 out of 10 students claimed their pronunciation had been improved a lot with song-based instruction in their language classrooms. These students also confessed that the use of songs in their language classrooms could ultimately help develop autonomous sense in their language learning as the use of songs could be used not only in their language classrooms but also in other contexts as an extra-curricular activities, not only for language learning but also for entertaining objectives.

In response to the last question "Are you more motivated to learn English with songs?", the results were also fascinating. After the implementation of song-based instruction, most students felt more motivated to learn the language. Their motivation was improved not only as a result of their personal preference for music but also as a result of the teacher's personality factors. Some of the notable comments were "...The teacher have encouraged me a lot and made me feel like music...", "...It is the teacher who has great impact on developing my motivation in language learning as she is so kind and encouraging. Most of the time, the classroom atmosphere is lively. Most of us are interested in listening to songs and taking parts in classroom activities...". Due too these motivating factors, some students also confesed that did their homework or the activities assigned by the teacher with passion and interest.

#### 4.2. Discussion

In the current study, the researcher conducted the survey and experiment by employing songs in teaching and learning listening English at Tran Van On High School.

As can be seen from the research results, listening is regarded as one of the most difficult skills to teach and acquire in English. Listening necessitates the desire to understand another person, a polite and welcoming attitude, and a willingness to open one's mind to see things from another's point of view. Due to the fact that listening is a mong the difficult skill to master, the majority of students have to struggle with listening in their learning process.

As previously stated, students who participated in the study included experimental group and control group. Both of these groups had similar listening abilities. The mean scores of the pre-test among the experimental group and the control group are more or less the same, with the values being  $5.15 \pm 1.511$  and  $5.20 \pm 1.436$  respectively. Although these students had been learning English for at least 8 years, the majority of them had everage scores in pre-test.

To determine whether there is a change in students' competence before and after the implementation of songs in listening teaching practice, the following two hypotheses are utilized:

*Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): There is a considerable difference in students' competence in listening skills before and after song-based instruction.*

*Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): There is no discernible change in students' competence in listening skills before and after song-based instruction.*

A T-test was employed to examine the score differences between the pre-test and the post-test. The output can be evaluated using the Sig. (2-tailed) rule as follows:

+ If the Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

+ If the Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, then H<sub>2</sub> is rejected.

The pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups are displayed in the tables that follow:

Table 10. Paired sample statistics

		Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Pre-test	Control group	5.20	40	1.436	.227
	Experimental group	5.15	40	1.511	.239
Post-test	Control group	5.10	40	1.549	.245
	Experimental group	6.10	40	1.317	.208

Table 11. Paired sample test

		Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pre-test	Control group Experimental group	0.050	2.160	0.341	-0.641	0.741	0.146	39	0.884
Post- test	Control group Experimental group	-1.000	2.124	0.336	-1.679	-0.321	-2.977	39	0.005

Data in Table 10 and 11 on the paired sample test reveals statistically significant differences in students' listening skill improvement before and after song-based instruction. The T-test data computation indicates that the P-value (Sig.) is 0.005, which is less than 0.05 or ( $0.005 < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) Paired t-test is therefore rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted. This demonstrates that there are considerable variations in listening abilities in the experimental group before and after utilizing songs in their listening classes. With the implementation of songs in English listening classes, the experimental group had better results on the

post-test than the control group (with the mean score of  $6.10 \pm 1.317$ , in compared to  $5.10 \pm 1.549$ ). As there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores in the post-test between the two groups, it can be revealed from these results that that the use of songs is a wonderful way to improve listening abilities for these students. Songs can also help students relax and have fun in their language learning. Songs can make listening more interesting and enjoyable.

At the end of the treatment, the responses from the pre- motivational and post-motivational questionnaires among the experimental group are compared for analysis. Before the treatment, most students were afraid of and did not have much interest in learning English, with the mean of the responses to the question "I like learning English language" being 3.0 only. As English was a compulsory subject, students almost felt boring and were under pressure when having English lessons, with the mean of the responses to the question "I do my homework regularly" being 3.0. After utilizing songs in listening practice, the the mean scores of the responses to the post-motivational questions were considerably higher. As there were statistically significant differences in students' responses to these two questionnaires, it could be stated that using songs can boost students' motivation in listening classes and developing their listening abilities. These findings are quite in line with the responses collected in the interviews, strengthening those which are suggested in the studies by previous authors such as Sevik (2011); Vera & Luna (2013); Jerabkova (2016); Al-Smadi (2020) and Ngoc (2021).

As second language teachers, we should strive to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to interpret real communication. This finding proves itself to be more convincing as the results collected from different kinds of instruments used in the survey are quite consistent. Music may provide students with fruitful practice in the real world. A song is a tale set to music; hence, there are examples of real speech that is slower, rhythmic, and repetitive - a great instrument for impressing onto the individual learning experience. It is necessary to emphasize that music is not given here as a panacea, replacing all other methods as the only effective teaching tool. It should, nevertheless, be regarded as a significant teaching approach and an appropriate instrument for classroom education. As a result, music and song may not only be entertaining, but may also give countless benefits to students in their language learning. Songs not only assist the teacher in teaching listening but also provide an engaging manner for students to fulfill their learning objectives.

It should be remembered that the adoption of songs to be taught should also take into account the needs of the students in order to assist them in learning and accomplishing their objectives. Among the determining factors that can contribute to the effective implementation of songs in developing students' listening abilities include the melody, the language and the content of the songs. Choosing suitable songs is often regarded as the initial and crucial step in song-based instruction process. In a learner-centered syllabus, the content should be derived through a process of consultation and negotiation with the learners, the principal consideration being the communicative or the entertaining needs of the learners. There are some factors that should be mentioned, which are: (i) *interest - the topics of the texts should be of students' interest*, (ii) *exploitability - the teaching and learning process should be facilitated to accomplish the objective of the course*, (iii) *readability - the text should be understandable to students both grammatically and semantically*, (iv) *topics - the topics should maintain students' interest and motivation*. Nevertheless, it can be challenging for educators to select texts that fulfill all these criteria, as the chosen material can either enhance or diminish the teacher's efforts. In order for meeting the broad objectives of a course, the following criteria should be considered when selecting sung texts: (i) the texts should align with the students' current linguistic and literary abilities; (ii) the texts should resonate with the students' interests; and (iii) the texts should not only serve as a tool for language learning and literary enjoyment but also as a source of motivation and meaningful educational opportunities for students' personal growth.

To meet these requirements, teachers should be well-trained in material development in general and in good preparation for song-based instruction in particular. As in teaching through other materials, the role of teachers in song-based instruction among others as informatory, communicators, organizers, conductors, motivators, directors and mentors, initiators, disseminators, facilitators, evaluators, and educators (Ayu, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion

Listening is regarded as one of the most difficult skills to teach and acquire in English. Listening necessitates a desire to understand another person, a polite and welcoming attitude, and a willingness to open one's mind to see things from another's point of view. Unfortunately, the majority of high school students still struggle with hearing, have vocabulary or unfamiliar word issues, and are unable to differentiate the main aspects in listening activities. After the treatment, there was a significant difference about the students' listening abilities and their motivation in learning English among the experimental group. From these findings, it can be concluded that that learning listening with songs is beneficial for increasing listening ability and motivating students to learn English. It is these benefits that necessitate the inclusion of songs as both a teaching material and an entertaining form in language education.

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