

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS USING SONGS IN LEARNING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUGAE

وجهات نظر الطلاب نحو استخدام الأغاني في تعلم اللغة العربية كلغة أجنبية لغوية

Nurhalimah Siregar

International Islamic University Malaysia

nurhalima@gmail.com

Abstract

Teachers and researchers agree that songs may serve as a valuable pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Songs motivate students and improvements have been seen in their achievements in learning a foreign language. Therefore, this study aims to investigate students' perceptions, attitudes and thoughts regarding the use of songs in the Arabic classroom. A sample of 197 form three students from two different government secondary schools in Malaysia took part in the current study. The data were collected through a questionnaire and then analyzed quantitatively using simple descriptive statistical analysis consisting of frequencies and percentages. The findings demonstrated that students gave positive responses towards the use of songs in learning Arabic. Songs

were regarded as an effective strategy that assisted students in learning Arabic and improved their performance in the subject. Based on the findings, this study suggests that songs should be used as a tool to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning Arabic language.

Key words: Song, teaching and learning, Arabic classroom.

ملخص البحث

اتفق المعلمون والباحثون على أن الأغاني قد تكون بمثابة أداة تعليمية قيمة في تعليم وتعلم لغة أجنبية. الأغاني تحفز الطلاب، وقد ساهمت تحسينات الأغاني في إنجازاتهم في تعلم لغة أجنبية، ولذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تعريف الطلاب بالتصورات والمواقف والأفكار بشأن استخدام الأغاني العربية في الفصول الدراسية. أُخذت عينة من 197 طالباً يشارك في الدراسة الحالية، وهم في مرحلة الصف الثالث الثانوي في اثنتين من مختلف المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في ماليزيا. جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان، ثم تم تحليلها كميًا باستخدام تحليل إحصائي

وصفي بسيط يتكون من الترددات والنسب المقوية. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب أعطوا إجابات إيجابية تجاه استخدام الأغاني في تعلم اللغة العربية. واعتبرت الأغاني استراتيجية فعالة تساعد الطلاب على تعلم اللغة العربية وتحسين أدائهم في هذا الموضوع. واستنادا إلى النتائج، تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أن الأغاني يجب أن تستخدم كأداة لزيادة فعالية التدريس وتعلم اللغة العربية. الكلمات الدالة: الأغنية، التعليم والتعلم، الفصول الدراسية العربية.

BACKGROUND OF THE TSUDY

Most people listen to music in their daily lives. They like music and it can be heard and played everywhere and every time in many activities for many different reasons. For instance, people use music as a religious and political systems (Onwuekwe, 2009; Shaked, 2011). People also use music as therapeutic medium (Masko, 2013; Pellitteri, 2000). However, people use and listen to the music for many different purposes, but most of them listen to music simply for enjoyment.

Moreover, song as a part of music that consists of lyrics with a unique symbol system and literature which is universal for all human beings (Mora, Fuentes, & Wermke, 2011; Salcedo, 2010), especially children. Every child has a musical taste (Murphy, 2002) and they have the abilities to respond to the song (Hodges, 2000). In fact, song has

become an essential part of education (Deere, 2010). Many studies have investigated the importance of songs in the educational field and found that song plays a vital role in teaching and learning. This is because song create a medium of learning in the unique way that emphasis on the fundamental learning processes and concepts of the subject areas (Siregar, 2015).

Scientists, teachers, and researchers agreed that song is a fundamental resource in education. especially when it is come in the teaching and learning a foreign language, songs can be a great asset in teaching language (Mora et al., 2011; Shabani & Torkeh, 2014; Yilmaz, & Sihhiye, 2011; Salcedo, 2010; Vinyets, 2013; Ashtiani, & Zafarghandi, 2015).

Songs have many advantages to enhance students' motivation in learning language and to develop students' language skills, which makes them feel joyful and enthusiastic in learning the language (Millington, 2011; Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014; Lin, 2013; Salcedo, 2010). According to Murphy (1992), this is because the song is highly motivational and highly memorable. Additionally, the usage of song in the classroom can provide a positive learning environment that leads learners to feel

relaxed and become involved actively in a game called communication.

According to Sevik (2011) & Sevik (2014) songs provide an excellent opportunity for repetition and practice. In a similar vein, Alipour et al., (2014) stated that a popular song can help students to retain vocabularies and keep them in long term memory. Here, Murphey (1992) believes that songs help students to recall the vocabularies, which is sometimes referred to as “the song stuck in my head phenomenon”.

Therefore, teachers believe that songs should be integrated into the curriculum of language teaching. As a result, several pedagogical techniques and recommendations have already been advanced which encourage the incorporation of songs into the foreign language curriculum (Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014).

Song usage in foreign language instruction has long been valued, especially in teaching English. However, research on the use of songs in the Arabic language-learning classroom has been rare. A survey of the last decade of articles in journals on teaching Arabic shows that the quantity is sparse compared to multitudinous articles on other foreign languages. Having said this, the researcher strongly feels the need to address the issue of the usage of songs in learning

Arabic. Therefore, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are students’ perceptions towards the use of songs in learning Arabic?
2. What are students’ attitudes towards using songs in learning Arabic?
3. What are students' thoughts about the effectiveness of using songs in learning Arabic?

METHODS

Research Design

This research was designed as a descriptive study with an aim to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts of Arabic foreign language learners about using songs in learning Arabic.

Participants

The participants of this study were 179 form three students from Islamic secondary schools in Malaysia. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants in order to get the most appropriate data from the pupils selected from specific schools. The participants were recruited from two different government Islamic secondary schools in Seremban and Selangor. The learners’ ages ranged between 13 and 15 years old. Most of the participants were 15 years old, they comprised of 98.3% (n=176) of the sample.

Those aged 14 and 13 years old held the same percentage 0.6% (n=1). With regards to gender, the distribution was almost equal with 45.3% (n=81) males, and 54.2% (n=97) females.

Research Instrument

The present study employed a questionnaire to gather data and answer the research questions. The items of the questionnaires were adapted from a previous study to suit the aims of this study as well as the characteristics of the participants. The questionnaire was translated into Malay language and later distributed among the selected students. The questionnaire was composed of 16 questions. In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to fill in their demographic information i.e. their age, gender, and level of study. In the second part, they were asked to choose the best option which represented their opinion about using songs in learning Arabic language. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with the options: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘undecided’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.691. This is very near .70 and is considered as acceptable in terms of the reliability of the research instrument (Cohen et al., 2007).

Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, the data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM Version 22. The researcher used descriptive statistical analysis to interpret the data. Frequencies and percentages were used in order to obtain the scores and significant measurements of the variables.

RESULTS

This section presents the results obtained from the analysis of the data for each item in three tables and a discussion about each table will then follow.

Table 1. Students’ perceptions towards the usage of songs in learning Arabic (n=179)

No	Statements	SD	D
1	We should learn more through songs in learning Arabic.	2 1.1%	2 1.1%
3	Learning through songs in Arabic lesson is a waste of time.	110 61.5%	39 21.8%
4	I enjoy learning Arabic through songs.	4 2.2%	6 3.4%
6	Song is not effective in learning Arabic.	85 47.5%	47 26.3%
10	Our teacher frequently teaches Arabic lessons through songs.	5 2.8%	27 15.1%

Table 1 above describes Arabic foreign language learners' perceptions towards the usage of songs in learning Arabic. The result indicates that the most number of participants agreed with statement one. Based on Table 1, almost all the respondents, 91% (n=163), opined that songs should be used more in the learning of Arabic language. 6.7% (n=12) declared that they were undecided and only a minority of 2.2 % (n=4) disagreed with the first statement. This finding shows that Arabic foreign language learners like to use songs in their learning process, and thus, they agreed to using songs more frequently in their lessons. With an agreement count of 83.3% (n=149), the result for statement four (4) comes second as the item most agreed with. 11.2% (n=20) of the respondents stated that they were undecided and only a small number, 5.6% (n=10), disagreed with the statement. This result shows that the learners enjoy learning Arabic through songs. This finding strengthens the argument that songs are an effective pedagogical tool in order to create an enjoyable experience in the process of learning Arabic.

It can be seen from Table 1 that statement three (3) was the most disagreed with statement, with a percentage of 84.3% (n=149). 8.9% (n=16) of the participants were unsure and only a small number of 4.5% (n=8) were not in favor of the statement. It

can be said that students disagreed that utilizing songs to learn Arabic was a waste of their time. This result strengthens the previous findings about the positive views of students towards the use of songs in learning a foreign language. Thus, the researcher suggests that songs should be included in designing the Arabic language curriculum. Following that, statement six (6) was the second statement most disagreed with. It shows that 73.8 % (n=132) of them disagreed with the statement as compared to 5.6% (n=10) of the participants agreeing with it. It means that students believed that the use of songs is effective in learning Arabic language. This finding again parallels previous studies on the effectiveness of using songs in foreign language classrooms.

Lastly, a large number of participants, 41% (n=74), were undecided about their teacher frequently teaching them through songs. 14% (n=25) of the participants strongly agreed that it was frequently used, 48 of them stated that they agreed, and 27.9% (n=32) of them disagreed with the statement. These figures may mean that students perceive that the use of songs in the Arabic language classroom is not a common practice, thus most of them chose to be neutral.

Table 2. Students' attitudes towards using songs in learning Arabic (n=179)

No	Statements	SD	increasing students' vocabulary	The result
2	I remember the vocabulary easily when I learn them through songs.	1.6%	statement two (2) indicates that 75% of students, 84.2% (n=150) agreed that it was	most of the
5	I learn vocabulary easier through songs.	-	easier to learn new words through songs. However, 12.3% (n=22) of them were not	sure about the statement, and only a minority
7	I enjoy making various movements when learning through songs.	4.2%	11.4% (n=20) of the respondents disagreed that songs could help them in memorizing new	vocabularies. The result of statement five (5)
11	I can sing a song after listening to it a few times.	1.6%	3.4% (n=6) of the participants agreed that songs help them to overcome the obstacles in	retaining and recalling the words, 12.8% (n=23)
12	I can answer the questions easily after listening to the songs.	1.6%	3.4% (n=6) of the participants agreed that songs help them to overcome the obstacles in	retaining and recalling the words, 12.8% (n=23)
16	Songs assists me to learn Arabic better.	2.8%	5.1% (n=9) of them declared that they were undecided, and only 4% (n=7) of the	participants disagreed with the item. These findings back previous studies that songs improve students' vocabulary by helping them to subconsciously learn and recall vocabulary. Thus, songs play an important role in learning Arabic vocabulary and should be used to assist students to master Arabic vocabulary.

The Table 2 above explores the results of Arabic foreign language learner's attitudes towards the use of songs in learning Arabic. Based on these results, the majority of Arabic learners believe that songs help them to overcome their difficulties in learning. On the other hand, 8.9% (n=16) of the participants stayed undecided and only a small number of them, 4.5% (n=8), disagreed with the statement. This finding shows that songs can be used as an effective teaching material. The lyrics of the songs assist students in understanding the subject better. Therefore, it is suggested that songs should be used as a teaching aids in the Arabic classroom.

Next, statements two (2) and five (5) are both related to the effectiveness of songs in

increasing students' vocabulary. The result of statement two (2) indicates that 75% of students, 84.2% (n=150) agreed that it was easier to learn new words through songs. However, 12.3% (n=22) of them were not sure about the statement, and only a minority 11.4% (n=20) of the respondents disagreed that songs could help them in memorizing new vocabularies. The result of statement five (5) closely resembles the previous result. 82.7% (n=148) of the participants agreed that songs help them to overcome the obstacles in retaining and recalling the words, 12.8% (n=23) of them declared that they were undecided, and only 4% (n=7) of the participants disagreed with the item. These findings back previous studies that songs improve students' vocabulary by helping them to subconsciously learn and recall vocabulary. Thus, songs play an important role in learning Arabic vocabulary and should be used to assist students to master Arabic vocabulary.

In addition, the result of the item "I can sing a song after listening to it a few times" reveal that the majority of students, 74.8% (n=134), could sing an Arabic song after listening to it. It means that songs provide repetition that leads to the automatic use of the target language.

Table 3. The learners' thoughts about the effectiveness of using songs in learning Arabic (n=179)	
No	Statements
8	Learning through songs in Arabic lessons develops my listening ability.
9	Learning through songs in Arabic lessons increases my self-confidence.
13	Learning Arabic through songs increase my motivation.
15	Songs helped me enhance my understanding in learning Arabic.
14	Songs helped me reduce the barriers in learning Arabic.

Table 3 highlights the students' thoughts on the effectiveness of using songs in learning Arabic. The analysis of the statement, "learning through songs in Arabic lessons develops my listening ability" indicated that the majority of the participants, 87.2% (n=156), believed that songs improved their listening skills. The rest of the respondents, 11.2% (n=20) were undecided, and only a minority of 1.7% (n=3) disagreed with the statement. The findings strengthen earlier research studies that claim that songs are very effective in developing students' listening skills. Therefore, songs should be an

important part in the Arabic language curriculum, especially in the improvement of language skills. Results for item thirteen (13) showed that a great number of students (83.8%) believed that songs are highly motivating, especially for young learners. At the same time, the result of the statement "learning through songs in Arabic lessons increases my self-confidence" was almost similar to that of statement thirteen (13) where the majority of students, 82.1% (n=147), believed that songs improved their confidence level and performance in learning Arabic. From both items nine (9) and thirteen (13) it can be said that songs are effective in boosting students' motivation and confidence. Hence, songs should be used in some Arabic learning activities.

The remaining statements, fourteen and fifteen, generally related to the students' thoughts towards using songs in learning Arabic. As per the results, a majority of the students agreed with the statement, "Songs helped me enhance my understanding in learning Arabic". The songs enhanced students' understanding about Arabic, hence, they perceived Arabic as easy. However, 15.1% (n=21) of them were undecided, and 3.9% (n=7) of the participants disagreed with the statement. Furthermore, the result of the last statement strengthens the overall findings. Based on Table 3, 70.9% (n=127) of

the participants agreed that songs decreased the obstacles in learning Arabic language. 11.7% (n=21) were undecided and the rest were in disagreement with the statement. It can be concluded that songs are a valuable pedagogical tool that play an important role in learning Arabic. The findings suggest that songs should be included and utilized in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to explore the opinions of Arabic learners from two public Islamic secondary schools on the use of songs in their classroom. Specifically, this study aimed to explore Arabic learners' perception and attitudes regarding the use songs and their thoughts about the effectiveness of the strategy. Reviewing the relevant literature about songs showed that songs are regarded as a helpful pedagogical tool. Songs are also considered as a common feature in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Songs positively impact the psychology, intellect and academics of foreign language learners. Particularly, a majority of researches highlighted that songs are seen as one of the most enjoyable activities and one of the most effective language learning strategies. As per the findings of this study, Malaysian Arabic learners also found songs an enjoyable

activity that formed an essential part in the teaching of Arabic to non-Arabic speakers. Additionally, songs were regarded as an effective strategy in improving students' performance in learning Arabic language for the following reasons.

The findings clearly demonstrated that songs improved students' interests towards Arabic language. It can be seen from the analysis of the results that the most agreed statement among the 16 items is statement one (1) i.e. almost all of the participants suggested that songs should be used more in the Arabic classroom. This finding parallels and strengthens the argument that songs are a very effective in enhancing students' interest in a subject, particularly in the learning of a foreign language. This is because songs have many advantages in teaching foreign languages. They are a good motivational tool, fun and relaxing; they add variety to the class and a break from textbook study (Millington, 2011; Kara & Aksel, 2013). Also, song creates a happy and relaxed environment David (1991).

Also reinforcing previous research and arguments, the findings of this study demonstrated that songs develop students' listening abilities. This is seen from the great number of the participants who reported that songs improved their listening skills. Thus, it can be deduced that songs are very effective

in the teaching of listening comprehension. Furthermore, the use of songs in the Arabic classroom aids the memorization of vocabulary. In other words, students learn and remember the vocabularies easily through the use of songs. According to Murphy (2002) when students sing, they automatically master the prosodic features of the language. Once the song has been learned, it will be stuck in their mind for the rest of their lives, with all the rhythms, grammatical niceties and vocabulary.

The results also found that songs develop students' motivation and self-confidence. The advantages of using songs in the classroom can create a positive learning atmosphere, provide multi-sensory experiences, develop memory, improve imagination, lower tension, and enhance motivation and inspiration (Lin, 2013). Consequently, these findings increase the pedagogical value of songs in the teaching and learning of Arabic as a foreign language. The findings also revealed that Arabic foreign language learners perceive that songs are effective in the learning of Arabic language and thus, it should be included in Arabic textbooks. The results reported that a big majority of students disagreed with the statement that learning Arabic through songs is a waste of time. These findings support the

idea that songs should be included in the Arabic language syllabus.

However, the findings of this study also demonstrated that the frequency with which teachers use songs in the Arabic classroom is regarded as moderate by the students. A total of 41% (n=74) of the participants were undecided about their teacher frequently teaching them through songs. This finding shows that the Arabic teachers in the two schools did not use songs frequently. And so, it is recommended to all Arabic teachers to use songs frequently in their classroom.

Based on the relevant literature and the findings from this study, it is possible to conclude that the use of songs are indeed necessary, effective and motivating for Arabic learners, should be included in teaching Arabic and in fact used frequently. Even though the results of this study are not generalizable due to the limitations of purposive sampling, the researcher would like to recommend that songs play an important role in teaching and learning the Arabic language. Therefore, songs should be used frequently in all levels of study in order to help the students in learning the Arabic language better.

REFERENCES

Ashtiani, F. T., & Zafarghandi, A. M. (2015).
The Effect of English Verbal Songs on

- Connected Speech Aspects of Adult English Learners' Speech Production. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(1), 212-226.
- Alipour, M., Gorjian, B., & Zafari, I. (2012). The effects of songs on EFL learners' vocabulary recall and retention: The case of gender. *Advances in digital multimedia*, 1(3), 140-143.
- David, C. (1991) A practical handbook of language teaching. England: Longman Phoenix Prentice Hall Cassell ELT.
- Hodges, D. A. (2000a). Implications of music and brain research. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(2) 17-22.
- Kara, Z. E., & Aksel, A. S. (2013). The Effectiveness of Music in Grammar Teaching on the Motivation and Success of the Students at Preparatory School at Uludag University. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 106, 2739-2745.
- Lin, P. Y. (2013). In-service elementary ESOL teachers' perspectives, usage, and difficulties of teaching English through music (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia). Retrieved from <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/37791>
- Masko, M. K. (2013). *Music therapy and spiritual care in end-of-life: ethical and training issues identified by chaplains and music therapists*. (Doctoral dissertation, United States). Retrieved from <http://gradworks.umi.com/36/08/3608350.html>
- Millington, N. T. (2011). Using songs effectively to teach English to young learners. *Language Education in Asia*, 2(1), 134-141.
- Mora, F.M.C.; Toscano-Fuentes, C. and Wermke, K. (2011). Melodies that help: The Relation between Language Aptitude and Musical Intelligence. *Anglistik International Journal of English Studies*. 22(1):101-118.
- Murphy, T. (1992). *Music & Song*. England: Oxford University Press.
- Onwuekwe, A. I. (2009). The socio-cultural implications of African music and dance. *Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*, 3(1), 171-185.
- Pellitteri, J. (2000). The consultant's corner music therapy in the special education setting. *Journal of Education and Psychological Consultation*. 11(3&4), 379-391.

- Salcedo, C. S. (2010). The effects of songs in the foreign language classroom on text recall, delayed text recall and involuntary mental rehearsal. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)*, 7(6), 19-30.
- Sevik, M. (2011). Teacher views about using songs in teaching English to young learners. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(21), 1027-1035.
- Sevik, M. (2014) Young EFL Learner Beliefs about classroom songs. *International Journal of English and Education*, 3(1), 50-59.
- Shaked, Y. (2011). On contemporary Palestinian music. *Search, Journal for New Music and Culture*, 8, 1-11.
- Shabani, M. B., & Torkeh, M. (2014). The relationship between musical intelligence and foreign language learning: the case of Iranian learners of English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(3), 26-32.
- Siregar, N. (2015). The usage of songs in the Arabic textbook on students' vocabulary recall; a case study at Sekolah Kebangsaan Batu Muda. Unpublished master thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.
- Vinyets, B. N. (2013). Using Songs in Primary Education: Advantages and Challenges. Retrieved from http://repositori.uvic.cat/bitstream/handle/10854/2514/trealu_a2013_bach_nuria_using_songs.pdf?sequence=1
- Yilmaz, Y. Y., & Sihhiye, A. T. (2011). The Mozart effect in the foreign language classroom a study on the effect of music in learning vocabulary in a foreign language. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 2(3), 88-98.