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**THE EFFECT OF TURKISH LYRICAL MUSIC ON FOREIGN
LANGUAGE VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND LONG TERM
RETENTION IN A TURKISH LANGUAGE COURSE (TÖMER)**

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"Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, and life to everything... Without music, life would be an error." (Plato)

Abstract

In most studies, a critical importance of vocabulary acquisition in ESL or EFL is not deniable. Wilkins (1972) uttered that “while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (pp.111–112). The current study is to investigate the effect of using lyrical music on foreign language vocabulary acquisition and its effect on long term retention of vocabulary in TÖMER courses in Urmia, Iran. For this purpose sixty male BA and MA university students with the range of 22 to 27 ages were selected and assigned to two groups of thirty. The first group as an experimental group (n=30) was taught the new words through music and the second one as a control group (n=30) received the traditional vocabulary instruction. The two main research hypotheses were: music has not any effects on vocabulary acquisition of students and music has no effects on long term retention of vocabulary. After the treatment, the same vocabulary post-test was administered to the groups. The data analysis through the statistical T-test indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in vocabulary acquisition and the in long term retention. As a result, the null hypotheses were rejected in this study.

Keywords: Music, Vocabulary, Acquisition, Retention, T-test, Foreign language



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Introduction

Rahimi and Sahragard (2008) emphasize using effective strategies in language learning that make vocabulary learning interesting and easy for learners. According to Schmitt (2010), a large amount of vocabulary is required for somebody to use language in a desired manner. Pikulski and Templeton (2004), and Zahedi et al (2012), consider the power of lexical items as a significant factor in dialect learning. Weatherford (1990) states that acquiring at least 5000 words basic vocabulary is essential for making a meaningful utterance in a foreign language. According to Schunk (1999) using music is one of the best ways in enhancing your vocabulary acquisition level. Whitaker (1981) and Huy (2007) overemphasize the undeniable influence of song in aiding the students in achieving all major language skills. Li (2008) as an academic researcher in vocabulary learning field, studied the effect of music on vocabulary learning. According to Schön et al (2008) and Short (1991), one of the main factors in developing the accents, pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary is the use of song and music. Language and music are two significant items that should be used together or are associated with each other in parallel form (Mora, 2000). As Purcell (1992) stated, repetitive listening to narrative conversations in comprehending new lexical items meanings in context can cause extreme tiredness among students but Abbott (2002) believes that listening to music is one of the significant factors in creating a relaxing atmosphere among students to overcome their boredom.

Literature review

Lyrical music

Meiling (2007) asserts that lyrical music is considered as one of the impressive items in enhancing students' conversation ability due to its formulaic structure. In addition to short and repetitive format of lyrics, these songs contain slow rhythm and frequent stops as facilitators in vocabulary learning and comprehension (Murpley, 1992). Furthermore, Kiger (1989) believes that lyrics with smooth rate can improve learners' achievement scores.



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Language and Music

Katchen (1988) stated that songs have a significant effect on all first/second/foreign language acquisition. Based on the several studies in language learning field, the vital importance of music in stimulating English learning is highly considerable (Salcedo, 2002).Furthermore, Modell et al (2009) and Murphey (1990) overemphasize the effect of song on enhancing the quality of language learning. As Ayotte (2004) noted "music and language share the same auditory, perceptive, and cognitive mechanisms that impose a structure on auditory information received by the senses" (p.10).Motivational and linguistic pros of music are confirmed in language learning field (Engh, 2013). Music beside other genuine items such as games and stories are helpful materials in language learning improvement (Razmjoo et al, 2012).

Music and the Brain

Gardner (1983) confirms that musical intelligence among other intelligences plays a significant role in pedagogy. Weinberger (2004) states that songs can affect many cells of brain and helps in better understanding. Based on Mora's statement (2000), songs have an important role in memorizing, lowering the anxiety level of learners, and in long time retention as well. Repetition of lexical by listening to music creates pleasure for students and helps in easy memorization. (Yuliana, 2003).Furthermore, Maess and Koelesh (2001) confirm that the language and music have the same place of processing in the brain.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

- Research Question 1: What is the effect of music on foreign language vocabulary acquisition among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran?
- Null Hypothesis 1: Music has no effect on foreign language vocabulary acquisition among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran.
- Research Question 2: What is the effect of music on long term vocabulary retention among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran?
- Null Hypothesis 2: Music has no effect on long term vocabulary retention among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran.



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Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of music on foreign language vocabulary storage and long term retention. The design of the study was a pretest posttest control group design. The Independent variables of the study was music and the dependent variable was vocabulary acquisition and retention in TÖMERcourse as a foreign language context.

Participants

In order to achieve these aims, sixty male students were selected randomly and assigned to two groups of thirty in Turkish language course in Urmia, Iran. The first group as an experimental group was taught the new words through music and the second one as a control group received the traditional vocabulary instruction. The participants were BA and MA students, with an age range of 22 to 27. Allthe participants were from Azeri language background with similar Turkish language proficiency level (pre intermediate).

Materials

The materials used in the present study were 12Turkish recorded songs which were a little above the students present proficiencylevel (above pre intermediate level). They were tape recorded songs and their spoken versions were recorded by a native like speaker in Urmia TÖMER center. They also contained 80 vocabularies which were unfamiliar to the students.

Procedure

To investigate the above mentioned questions of the thesis hypotheses, two control and experimental groups were selected .The participants attended Turkish classes for 90 minutes lesson periods, 3 days a week and 12 sessions each month .The entire period of experimental study was twomonths (24 sessions). First of all, the pretest was given to the students who were studying at the pre-intermediate level in both groups to make sure that none of the students knew the vocabularies. Two groups were approximately at the same level on



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vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of the program. As a pilot study, before the treatment the teacher gave students 80 words from the texts to the students to write their Persian equivalents. None of these words were familiar to students. The music group (experimental group) heard the music versions while the no-music group (control group) heard the spoken versions. In the end, 2 post-tests of vocabulary were administered to investigate the students' vocabulary acquisition achievement in both groups. The correct Persian equivalent meaning scored one and the incorrect equivalent scored zero.

Teacher made test

As the test was teacher made, the reliability ratio of the test had been calculated. The reliability of the tests was calculated using Spearman –Brown prediction formula as a criteria relating psychometric reliability to test length and used to predict the reliability of a test after changing the test length (Spearman and Brown, 1910). The reliability of the first posttest was equal to 0.82 and the second posttest was equal to 0.84. The achieved coefficient showed that the reliability of the tests were acceptable.

Data Analysis

In order to determine the long-term effects of music, two post tests were performed in two different points of times. The first posttest was conducted and in order to estimate the long term retention of vocabulary, the second posttest was administered four weeks after the first posttest. T-test analysis was conducted to see whether the difference between these two groups is significant or not. The descriptive statistics for the two groups were calculated and the results are shown in table 1 and table 2.



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Results

Findings of the study are presented below:

Table 1. The results of the T-test (First post-test) on the means of two groups to evaluate the effect of music on foreign language vocabulary acquisition

Group	NO	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Degrees of Freedom	T-observed	P
Music group	30	88.08	17.37	3.01	58	2.70	0.01
Non-Music group	30	72.68	27.76	4.92	58		

According to table 1, it was shown that the music group performed better than non-music group. The mean score of music group is equal to 88.08 but the mean score of non-music group is equal to 72.68. The result indicates that music has positive effect on foreign language vocabulary acquisition. Hence, the first null hypotheses was rejected (Music has no effect on foreign language vocabulary acquisition among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran).

Table 2. The results of the T-test (Second post-test) on the means of two groups to evaluate the effect of music on long term vocabulary retention

Group	NO	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Degrees of Freedom	T-observed	P
Music group	30	77.22	22.44	3.92	58	4.35	0.01
Non-Music group	30	51.48	25.78	4.54	58		



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In order to determine the long-term retention of vocabulary, the second post-test was administered four weeks after the first post-test. According to table 2, the results show that music group had better vocabulary retention than non-music group. The mean score of music group in second post-test was 77.22 and the mean score of non-music group at the same post-test was 51.48. So the second null hypotheses was also rejected (Music has no effect on long term vocabulary retention among TÖMER students in Urmia, Iran).

Discussions

The main aim of this study is to highlight the importance of lyrical music in vocabulary learning and storing in long term memory as an essential part in foreign language learning. For the purpose of this study sixty students (60 boys) participated in this research and randomly divided to two groups of 30 (experimental group and control group). The participant's scores were analyzed using t-test after the treatment. The results indicate that music has a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition and long term retention. Many language researchers such as Cameron (2001) and Linse (2005) confirm that vocabulary acquisition plays an important role in schooling. Furthermore, Schmitt (2000) states that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" (p. 55). There are also other supports for positive role of music on language learning by (Katchen, 1988 & Puhl, 1989; and Baez, 1993). The result of present paper is in line with the results of researches conducted by Schunk (1999) and Yuliana (2003) in the case of vocabulary learning by using the music. Furthermore, the findings of this article is also congruent with Lozanov's (1979) and Collins (2013) study who stated that the music is one of the helpful tools in long retention and memorization of materials. Indeed, the present paper is related to the studies of Larsen-Freeman (1985) who considered the effect of songs on establishing of creative environments and that of Anshel & Kipper (1988) who emphasized the relaxed state of mind because of music use. As the same result of this paper, Rodriguez (2010)'s paper also confirms the effect of music on vocabulary learning enhancement. In the same line with this research, Rosova (2007)'s finding confirms the important role of music in language learning. Therefore, based on the findings of



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the present study and previous ones conducted by other researchers, music plays a significant role in acquiring new lexical items and storing them in long term memory as well.

Conclusions

The findings confirm that melody has an impressive effect on vocabulary acquisition and long term memory retention. There is a great difference between music group and non-music group in Turkish language vocabulary acquisition and retention. Based on the findings, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of both groups (control and experimental group) in the post-test. As it was shown, the experimental group outperformed the control group. It follows then that music has a positive effect on foreign language acquisition and long term retention. The results of the present study showed that the independent variable (music treatment) had a positive effect on the dependent variables (students' vocabulary acquisition and retention) in the post- test.

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