

**THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN IMPROVEMENT OF LISTENING IN EFL  
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**Annotation.** The article discusses about the significance of implementation of music and songs in order to improve children's listening comprehension in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes. The author examines diverse uses of songs and provides relevant examples about the benefits of every single type.

**Key words:** phonemic awareness, building vocabulary, descriptive language, echoing songs

Listening is a crucial yet often overlooked language skill in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. For young English language learners, listening comprehension presents a particular challenge due to their limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge and short attention spans. However, listening also provides a fun, engaging way for children to pick up the rhythm, intonation and natural pronunciation of English through exposure. Incorporating music into EFL lessons can significantly boost children's motivation and enjoyment of English lessons while simultaneously strengthening their listening abilities. The repetitive nature of songs and chants helps automatize vocabulary and structures. Music also lowers children's affective filters by creating a relaxed environment where they feel comfortable mimicking the accents and rhythms of English through singing. This article will explore how incorporating different types of music can improve various listening skills in young EFL learners and enhance overall language acquisition.

**Developing Phonemic Awareness through Rhyming Songs**

A foundational listening skill is phonemic awareness - the ability to distinguish individual sounds and phonemes that make up words. For young English learners especially, correctly perceiving phonemes like /æ/ vs /ε/ or /θ/ vs /ð/ presents a challenge. However, rhyming songs provide a playful way to strengthen phonemic awareness. The repetition of rhyming word patterns draws children's attention to specific sounds at the end of words. For example, the song "5 Little Monkeys" reinforces the /εŋ/ sound in each verse through rhyming words like "hanging," "swinging," "eating," etc. Other classic rhyming songs like "Baa Baa Black Sheep" and "Old McDonald" target common English sounds. Teachers can also create simple call-and-

response songs focused on individual phonemes. By singing rhyming songs regularly from an early age, children's phonemic awareness improves naturally through enjoyment rather than drudgery [4].

### **Building Vocabulary through Theme Songs**

Another key listening goal is vocabulary development. Theme songs provide an engaging way for children to learn both content area vocabulary as well as everyday social language. For example, songs about days, months, numbers and colors efficiently teach these foundational topic words through repetition set to melody. Concept songs help internalize vocabulary related to science themes like parts of plants, animals or the water cycle. Social songs give children exposure to language for greetings, feelings, manners and actions. Singing thematically-linked songs multiple times during a unit immerses children in that topic vocabulary to support listening comprehension and use. Visual props or actions further reinforce word meanings for young learners. In addition, singing songs builds students' familiarity with contextualized, natural English - beneficial for listening to new conversations (Cheng & Wu, 2017).

### **Understanding Descriptive Language through Story Songs**

Comprehending descriptive language poses another listening hurdle, yet story songs offer a tool to develop this skill. Narrative songs engagingly embed description, sequence and cause/effect into a memorable tune. Common examples include "The Muffin Man," "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "The Wheels on the Bus." During and after singing, teachers can ask students descriptive questions about characters, settings, actions or problems to check understanding. Songs can also introduce figurative expressions through context. For example, "London Bridge" models the idiom "fall down" within a repetitive pattern. Repeated listening promotes familiarity with more complex vocabulary and language patterns found in stories and conversations. Teachers may also integrate motions or props to further reinforce the story elements and enrich the listening experience [2].

### **Perfecting Pronunciation through Echoing Songs**

Accurate pronunciation represents the pinnacle listening achievement, yet drilling the fine details of pronunciation can quickly bore young learners. Echo songs succeed in making pronunciation practice an engaging game where children mirror the teacher's enunciation through singing. The teacher sings a line and the students repeat, focusing on clear diction, intonation, pitch, rhythm and stress. After several echoes, the teacher purposefully mispronounces words to see if students catch and correct those mistakes. Popular echo songs like "The Wheels on the Bus," "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," and "If You're Happy and You Know It" offer lines

that practice specific vowels and consonant blends. With regular echoing practice, children internalize and automatize proper pronunciation [5].

### **Comprehension through Total Physical Response Songs**

Kinesthetic learning helps cement listening comprehension in a memorable way. Total Physical Response (TPR) songs use motions to promote full body engagement and multisensory encoding of language. In TPR songs, students mirror actions described in the lyrics such as jumping, clapping or waving. By listening and watching movements modeled by the teacher, students grasp the meaning of verbs, prepositions and descriptive phrases through embodied experience. Action songs are highly motivating for children and include classics like "Head and Shoulders," "If You're Happy and You Know It" and "The Hokey Pokey." After many repetitions, students recall the vocabulary through the muscle memory of the corresponding motions. TPR reinforces the natural connectivity between language, thought and bodily experience crucial for young minds developing language comprehension [1].

### **Listening for Details through Question Song Games**

For advanced listening practice, teachers can utilize song games that require comprehension of finer details. One option dubbed the "Question Song Game" challenges students to listen for subtle cues within repetitive lyrics. The teacher sings the same song with a slight variation each round, such as changing one word or detail. Students must catch the change and ask an open question for clarification. Another game presents multiple choice listening exercises by embedding three alternate word options into different verses. Students listen and choose the option they heard. Question games motivate close attention and teach students to listen for implicit clues. Variations keep challenge and fun high [6].

In conclusion, music provides a highly engaging and effective medium for fostering all areas of listening comprehension development in young EFL learners. Through songs that teach vocabulary, convey stories, develop phonemic skills and reinforce pronunciation, children's listening abilities improve in a fun, multilayered manner. Integrating various music activities encourages motivation, sustained attention and multisensory encoding of language. While traditionally overlooked, incorporating different types of songs holds immense potential to strengthen children's listening competence in English and support overall language learning. When utilized strategically, music serves as a powerful yet enjoyable tool for developing proficiency in this essential yet often challenging language skill.

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