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The Impact of English Song Exposure on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Acquisition of Phrasal Verbs

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of listening to English songs on the acquisition of phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. A sample of 100 learners initially took the Oxford Placement Test to assess language proficiency. Based on the homogeneity test results, 80 learners, whose scores were within one standard deviation of the mean, were selected for the study. These participants were divided randomly and equally into an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 40 female learners. The experimental group was taught phrasal verbs using English songs as examples in eight instructional sessions, which incorporated interactive speaking activities and feedback. Conversely, the control group received the same instruction and activities without the use of songs; instead, written examples and teacher narration were provided. All sessions were conducted via Telegram, with identical content for both groups, except for the presence of songs in the experimental group. An independent samples t-test was performed to analyze the differences between the two groups in pretest and posttest performance. Results showed that listening to songs significantly enhanced the learning of phrasal verbs in the experimental group. The study concludes with theoretical and pedagogical implications for EFL teaching.

Keywords: phrasal verbs, English songs, EFL learners, language acquisition, Iranian learners, instructional methods

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1. Introduction

In today's interconnected and globalized world, English has established itself as the lingua franca of international communication, commerce, and education (Mufwene, 2010). Consequently, mastery of the English language is increasingly regarded as essential for academic and professional success, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries (Hult, 2017). Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—listening is often considered one of the most challenging yet vital components of effective communication (Sadiku, 2015). As Rost (2002) states, listening is the fundamental language skill, providing the foundation for the development of other language competencies. Despite its significance, however, listening is frequently overlooked in English as a foreign language (EFL) curricula, especially in contexts where learners have limited access to authentic English input. Furthermore, he defines listening comprehension as "active process of uttered messages and making meaning from them, emphasizing its dynamic nature. This process involves various cognitive strategies, including sound discrimination, inferencing, and contextual understanding.

A notable difficulty faced by EFL learners is the acquisition of phrasal verbs, which are pervasive in both spoken and written English. Phrasal verbs present unique challenges due to their idiomatic nature and non-literal meanings, often not inferable from their individual components (Gardner & Davies, 2007). For example, understanding expressions such as "*give up*" or "*run out*" requires more than just knowing the meanings of the individual words "*give*" and "*up*" or "*run*" and "*out*". Instead, learners must grasp the specific context and figurative use of language. This poses particular challenges for Iranian EFL learners, as their native language, Farsi, does not employ phrasal verbs in the same manner.

In response to these challenges, educators and researchers have continuously sought innovative methods to improve the teaching and learning of phrasal verbs in EFL contexts. One approach that has gained traction is the integration of music, specifically songs, as a pedagogical tool in language instruction. The benefits of using songs in language education are well-documented. Songs not only enhance motivation and engagement but also provide learners with authentic linguistic input that can improve vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation,

and listening skills (Medina, 1993). Additionally, the repetitive and rhythmic patterns found in songs facilitate memory retention, allowing learners to internalize and recall language structures, including phrasal verbs, more effectively (Murphey, 1992). Moreover, the benefits of using music in language education extend beyond general language skills and can be specifically advantageous for acquiring phrasal verbs. For instance, music lyrics offer a valuable source for both explicit and implicit learning of phrasal verbs, addressing the need for authentic exposure in English as a second language (ESL) contexts (Akbary et al., 2018). The melody and rhythm enhance the memorability of these multi-word units, facilitating long-term retention and recall. Furthermore, Lems (2005) asserts that "music can serve as a powerful tool in helping learners engage with and internalize language, particularly in relation to challenging linguistic constructs."

Although the benefits of music for language learning are well-established (Medina, 1993; Murphey, 1992), there is a significant gap in understanding its effectiveness in teaching specific grammatical structures, such as phrasal verbs, particularly for Iranian EFL learners. Current research tends to focus on general vocabulary or listening skills in ESL environments, with little attention given to how music might aid in the acquisition of phrasal verbs in EFL contexts, which often lack authentic exposure. This gap is particularly pronounced for Iranian learners, as the absence of direct Persian equivalents makes mastering phrasal verbs more challenging. Additionally, the limited exposure to authentic English in Iran highlights the need for innovative strategies like music integration. Consequently, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of exposure to English songs on the learning and usage of phrasal verbs among intermediate Iranian EFL learners. It seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of music-based interventions in this specific context and to offer insights on how to utilize music to address the unique challenges faced by these learners.

2. Literature Review

The literature review tries to understand the theoretical frameworks and the academic tradition that underlie the embedding of music in language teaching, and to understand, in particular, the use of music in teaching complex linguistic structures such as phrasal verbs. This subsection discusses some of the most relevant areas to the research, namely the difficulties of teaching

phrasal verbs, the importance of listening comprehension in language acquisition, and the importance of motivation and cognitive strategies in learning. In addition, it discusses theoretical underpinnings for using music as a teaching instrument by analyzing theories of the processing of musical literacy, the processing of music in education based on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and research on the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor implications of music in education. By reviewing these studies together, the literature review identifies not only the gaps in the current research (for example, too little attention paid to Iranian EFL learners) but also the reason why research into the role of English songs in improving the teaching of phrasal verbs needs to be undertaken.

2.1. Theoretical Background

This part presents the theoretical background to the effect of listening to English songs on learning phrasal verbs among the Iranian EFL learners. The literature used specific theories from three relevant fields so as to formulate a blended approach on which to base the study: language acquisition, cognitive psychology, and music education. It includes a review of the processes of listening comprehension, the ambivalence of the phrasal verb construction, pedagogical use of music, cognitive processes in interaction with auditory input, and the role of motivation in language learning.

2.1.1. Listening Comprehension

Acquiring effective communication skills relies heavily on listening comprehension, a fundamental ability that lays the groundwork for successful verbal exchange. It encompasses not only the ability to hear sounds but also to interpret and make sense of spoken language in real-time interactions.

Research indicates that effective listening requires metacognitive awareness—learners must plan, monitor, and evaluate their comprehension processes (Goh, 2000). For instance, successful listeners activate background knowledge and use contextual clues to infer meanings, particularly when encountering idiomatic expressions such as phrasal verbs. Vandergrift (1997) asserts that good listeners can get meaning when they encounter unfamiliar words, highlighting the importance of context in listening comprehension.

The challenge of listening comprehension is particularly pronounced for EFL learners, as they often struggle with linguistic constructs that do not exist in their native languages. For example, Iranian EFL learners face significant difficulties with phrasal verbs due to the lack of similar structures in Farsi, which complicates their understanding and usage (Gardner & Davies, 2007). This gap underscores the necessity of providing learners with rich listening experiences that contextualize these expressions.

Moreover, the context of listening activities significantly influences comprehension outcomes. Morley (1972) emphasizes that it has to do with understanding the context and intention of the communicating suggesting that authentic listening tasks are vital for developing learners' skills. Engaging with real-world materials, such as songs, can offer meaningful contexts that enhance learners' ability to grasp phrasal verbs in their natural usage.

Finally, the motivational aspect of listening cannot be underestimated. Emotional engagement plays a pivotal role in learners' persistence and success in comprehension tasks. Dörnyei (1994) notes that emotionally engaged learners are more probable to go on when they come across difficulties. Integrating enjoyable materials, such as music, can enhance emotional engagement, leading to improved listening comprehension and a greater likelihood of mastering complex linguistic structures.

Considering the critical role listening comprehension plays in understanding contextual cues and inferring meaning, particularly for EFL learners who grapple with complex linguistic dimensions, the following section will address the specific challenges and features involved with phrasal verbs, an area in which strong listening skills are paramount for accurate comprehension and effective communication.

2.1.2. Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are a significant yet challenging aspect of English language learning, particularly for EFL learners. Defined as verb phrases that consist of a main verb combined with one or more particles (prepositions or adverbs), phrasal verbs often convey meanings that are not immediately apparent from the individual components. For example, the meaning of "give up"

cannot be deduced solely from the meanings of "*give*" and "*up*", making them a source of confusion for learners (Benson et al., 1986).

The complexity of phrasal verbs arises from their idiomatic nature and the context-dependent meanings they can possess. As highlighted by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), the idiomaticity of the phrasal verbs renders them very difficult for learners to learn. This difficulty is compounded for Iranian EFL learners, whose native language, Farsi, does not employ phrasal verbs in a similar way, thereby limiting their exposure and familiarity with these structures (Moinzadeh, 2004).

Understanding and using phrasal verbs effectively requires not only knowledge of their meanings but also the ability to recognize the contexts in which they are appropriately used. Research has shown that explicit instruction can enhance learners' understanding and usage of phrasal verbs. For instance, Schmitt's (2000) study indicated that direct teaching methods, including contextualized practice, significantly improve vocabulary acquisition, including phrasal verbs. Moreover, learning phrasal verbs in context, such as through songs or narratives, can facilitate deeper understanding and retention (Thornbury, 2002).

Cognitive processing plays a crucial role in mastering phrasal verbs. Learners must engage in semantic mapping, where they connect the meanings of the verb and the particle to develop an integrated understanding of the expression (Nation, 2001). This cognitive strategy can be supported through various pedagogical approaches, such as the use of multimedia resources, which provide rich contextual input that enhances meaning-making (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002).

Given the inherent complexities of phrasal verbs and the necessity of contextualized learning for their mastery, the subsequent section explores the potential of music as a pedagogical tool, examining how its unique properties can address the challenges associated with learning these idiomatic expressions and enhance overall language acquisition.

2.1.3. Music as a Pedagogical Tool

The use of music in language learning has long been recognized as a valuable instructional strategy. Songs offer learners an authentic context for language exposure, enabling them to

engage with the rhythm, melody, and natural flow of the target language. As Murphey (1992) highlights, music has a unique mnemonic effect, making it easier for learners to internalize vocabulary and grammatical structures. The repetitive nature of song lyrics facilitates retention, helping learners to better remember language patterns. Additionally, songs often contain colloquial expressions and culturally relevant language, offering learners an immersive experience (Lems, 2005).

The theoretical foundation for incorporating music into language learning is further bolstered by Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which posits that individuals possess various forms of intelligence, with linguistic and musical intelligences being closely linked. According to Gardner's theory, some learners may be more responsive to musical input, which in turn may enhance their ability to acquire complex language forms such as phrasal verbs.

Medina (1993) underscores the motivational benefits of using music in the classroom. Songs provide a dynamic and enjoyable alternative to traditional language exercises, increasing student engagement. They can serve as both a tool for learning and a motivational driver, particularly for younger or less confident learners who might find conventional learning activities daunting. The inherent enjoyment in music helps reduce the anxiety commonly associated with language acquisition and can lead to more natural language use (Lems, 2005).

Music also connects language with emotion, which can enhance cognitive processes. Research suggests that the emotional connection people have with music can deepen their engagement with the material and improve memory retention (Jalongo & Bromley, 1984). These emotional ties can encourage learners to revisit songs repeatedly, further reinforcing the language structures within them. Songs, therefore, are not only useful for learning but also for creating an emotional bond with the language, which could lead to sustained interest in language learning (Murphey, 1992).

To understand how music facilitates language learning, it is essential to consider the underlying cognitive processes involved in listening comprehension, which will be explored in the next section.

2.1.4. Cognitive Processing in Listening

Listening is a complex cognitive process that requires active engagement from the learner. According to Buck (2001), listening comprehension is an interactive process that entails recognizing speech sounds, decoding those sounds, and constructing meaning from them. This process demands the activation of both bottom-up and top-down cognitive skills. Bottom-up processing involves the recognition of sounds and word boundaries, while top-down processing entails using prior knowledge and context to make sense of what is being heard (Field, 2008).

For language learners, especially in EFL contexts, cognitive load can be high due to the dual demands of processing unfamiliar sounds and simultaneously constructing meaning. According to Vandergrift (2007), successful listeners employ strategies such as predicting content, making inferences, and self-monitoring their comprehension. These metacognitive strategies are essential in helping learners navigate the complexities of listening comprehension, particularly when faced with authentic materials such as songs or native speech.

Furthermore, cognitive processing is deeply tied to working memory. As Baddeley (1992) explains, working memory allows listeners to hold information temporarily while simultaneously processing new input. The demands of language processing can overload working memory, making it difficult for learners to retain and interpret information, especially in fast-paced or noisy environments. Songs, due to their repetitive structure and slower pace compared to natural conversation, can lighten the cognitive load on working memory, giving learners more time to process and understand the language (Schmidt, 1990).

The role of context is also vital in cognitive processing during listening. According to Anderson (1995), contextual cues such as intonation, stress patterns, and non-verbal signals play an important role in helping listeners decode meaning. By integrating songs into language instruction, teachers can provide learners with an enriched context for understanding linguistic patterns, which can lead to more effective language acquisition. Beyond the cognitive processes involved, the effectiveness of listening comprehension and language acquisition is significantly influenced by learner motivation, which will be explored in the following section.

2.1.5. The Role of Motivation

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the key factors influencing language acquisition. According to Dörnyei (1994), motivation provides the driving force necessary to initiate learning and sustain it over time. In the context of language learning, motivation can be classified into two broad categories: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to the learner's desire to integrate with the target language community, while instrumental motivation is associated with pragmatic goals, such as passing exams or securing a job (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

In relation to the use of songs as a pedagogical tool, motivation plays a significant role in determining the effectiveness of such an approach. Songs can trigger both integrative and instrumental motivation. Integratively motivated learners may feel more connected to the cultural aspects of the language through songs, while instrumentally motivated learners may find that songs help improve their language skills more enjoyably and efficiently (Medina, 1993).

Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) argue that teachers play a crucial role in shaping learners' motivation. By introducing creative and culturally relevant materials like songs, teachers can foster a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment. This, in turn, can lead to increased learner autonomy, as students are more likely to engage in self-directed learning when they find the material interesting and personally meaningful.

Moreover, Schumann's (1997) socio-affective filter hypothesis posits that learners' emotional states influence their ability to acquire a second language. Positive emotional experiences such as enjoyment from listening to music can lower the affective filter, allowing learners to absorb language input more effectively. In this regard, songs not only serve as a learning tool but also as a motivator that can reduce anxiety and increase learners' willingness to communicate (Lems, 2005).

Having established the theoretical underpinnings of listening comprehension, phrasal verb acquisition, music as a pedagogical tool, cognitive processing, and the crucial role of motivation, the following section will now examine existing empirical research directly

investigating the relationship between these elements, focusing on studies that have explored the use of music in enhancing language learning outcomes, particularly in the context of phrasal verb acquisition.

2.2. Previous Studies

Research on the role of music in language learning has gained increasing attention, with several studies exploring its impact on various aspects of language acquisition. The following section provides a summary of key studies relevant to the effect of music on learning outcomes, particularly in the context of reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and motivation in EFL learners.

Rashidi and Faham (2011) investigated the impact of classical music (Mozart sonata) on the reading comprehension performance of 60 Iranian EFL learners over three months. Their findings revealed a significant improvement in the reading comprehension of students exposed to music, with the experimental group outperforming the control group, which had no background music.

Aghajani (2019) examined not only the effect of music on reading but also its influence on personality dimensions (introverts and extroverts) among 83 EFL students. The study concluded that background music serves as a facilitator rather than a distraction, promoting better reading performance.

Sahebdel and Khodadust (2014) conducted a similar study with 57 Iranian EFL learners, aged 14–16, comparing the effects of background music during silent reading. Results from pre- and post-tests indicated that the group exposed to music outperformed the control group in reading comprehension tasks.

Bird (2017) explored the impact of instrumental music on reading comprehension, highlighting that modern instrumental music can not only improve reading performance but also help reduce students' anxiety.

Ludke et al. (2014) investigated the effect of rhythmic activities and songs on vocabulary learning in Hungarian as a foreign language. Their study found that rhythmic and

sung conditions significantly enhanced participants' vocabulary retention and speaking performance.

Džanić and Pejić (2016) explored the use of songs to improve young learners' English vocabulary. They concluded that songs positively influenced vocabulary retention, enhanced learning experiences, and increased students' motivation for language learning.

Listiyaningsih (2017) focused on listening skills, showing that listening to English songs significantly improves learners' pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall listening comprehension.

Finally, Rezaei and Ahour (2015) emphasized that songs are not merely entertaining tools but can be effectively utilized to improve listening comprehension, particularly in creating a more relaxed and motivating learning environment.

2.3. Statement of the Problem

Despite the well-established importance of listening comprehension in second language acquisition, it often remains underemphasized in many EFL contexts, including Iran, where traditional instruction prioritizes grammar and vocabulary. This imbalance contributes to learners' difficulty in mastering complex linguistic elements such as phrasal verbs, crucial for fluency yet often neglected in standard textbooks and instruction. The challenge of mastering phrasal verbs is further compounded by their idiomatic nature and the absence of direct equivalents in Persian, making them difficult for Iranian EFL learners to decode and use accurately. While research suggests songs offer a promising method for teaching vocabulary and improving listening skills, their potential for teaching and reinforcing the correct usage of phrasal verbs remains significantly underexplored, particularly in the Iranian EFL context, where cultural considerations necessitate careful selection and integration of songs in educational settings. Therefore, this study aims to address this multifaceted gap by rigorously investigating the effect of exposure to carefully selected English songs on the acquisition, retention, and appropriate use of phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. By focusing specifically on phrasal verbs and examining the efficacy of a readily accessible and potentially engaging medium like songs, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for

EFL educators in Iran and similar contexts seeking to enhance learners' communicative competence and fluency.

2.4. Research Question

The study aimed to investigate the following research question:

RQ. Does listening to English songs have any positive effect on the learning of phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate EFL language learners?

2.5. Research Hypothesis

With regard to the above-mentioned question, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H0. Listening to English songs does not have a positive effect on the learning of phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate language learners.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

For this study, 80 female EFL learners, aged 15 to 25, were selected from an initial pool of 100 students based on a placement test. These learners, all Persian speakers, were enrolled in the English section of the online Jalali Language Center in Iran. The selection followed a two-step process: first, convenient sampling was used, followed by homogenization based on their scores from the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). This ensured a similar level of general English proficiency among the participants. The participants were then randomly assigned into two equal groups of 40: the experimental group, which learned phrasal verbs through English songs, and the control group. While OQPT scores aimed to create homogenous groups, it is acknowledged that individual differences such as musical aptitude or prior language learning experiences may have influenced the results. Due to the scope and design of the study, these factors were not directly measured or controlled. However, random assignment was used to distribute these potential differences evenly across both the experimental and control groups, thus mitigating their influence on the comparative results. Table 1 presents the learners' demographic information.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Learners

Number of Learners	100
Gender	Female
Age	15-25
Native Language	Persian
Target Language	English

3.2. Instruments

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following instruments were used:

3.2.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)

The OQPT was used to assess language proficiency and group EFL learners into pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced levels. QQPT (version 2) consists of 60 items divided into two sections: 40 assessing language aspects like grammar and phrasal verbs, and 20 multiple-choice items. Scores range from 18–60, classifying learners from elementary to proficient. The OQPT was chosen due to its familiarity to participants and its ability to ensure homogeneity in language proficiency. Its reliability is 0.77. Additionally, it is internationally distributed by Pearson Longman, offers authentic content, and emphasizes cultural fluency, making it ideal for this study.

3.2.2. Phrasal Verbs Pretest and Posttest

Before the treatment, a 40-item multiple-choice phrasal verb pretest was administered to ensure both groups had an equivalent level of phrasal verb knowledge. Students had 45 minutes to complete the test, which was based on course materials. To ensure reliability and validity, the test was reviewed by colleagues, piloted with 30 similar students, and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha. The item difficulty index ranged from 0.30 to 0.67, confirming item appropriateness. The same test was used as a posttest to assess progress after the treatment, ensuring evaluation consistency.

3.3. Materials

This study utilized popular English songs from well-known cartoons and movies like *The Lion King, Frozen, Toy Story,* and *The Little Mermaid* to teach phrasal verbs to Iranian EFL learners. These songs were selected for their appeal, rich content of commonly used phrasal verbs relevant to the learners' proficiency level, and clear, comprehensible lyrics. The selection also prioritized songs that were likely to be familiar and culturally relevant to the participants. Each session introduced 6 to 8 key phrasal verbs embedded in the lyrics, which were highlighted, discussed, and reinforced through various activities. The songs were played multiple times to provide a natural and memorable context for learning. Follow-up exercises helped students practice using the phrasal verbs in speaking and writing, enhancing their comprehension and retention for real-life application.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The researcher followed several steps to conduct the study. Initially, a proficiency test was administered to 100 EFL learners. After analyzing the test scores, 80 participants, whose scores fell within one standard deviation above and below the mean, were selected. These participants were divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. A phrasal verb pretest was then given to both groups to assess their initial knowledge.

The instruction consisted of eight sessions for both groups, each lasting around 30 minutes. Six to eight phrasal verbs were introduced per session. In the experimental group, the teacher used songs to teach phrasal verbs, while in the control group, the teacher used written examples and read them aloud. Sessions were delivered via video in two separate Telegram groups for the experimental and control groups, with two sessions per week. Learners had the opportunity to ask questions and submit assignments in their respective groups, and the teacher provided feedback.

The feedback provided by the teacher consisted primarily of written comments on the assignments submitted by the learners via Telegram. This feedback focused on the accuracy of phrasal verb usage in context and suggestions for improvement. To ensure standardization across both groups, the teacher used a pre-determined rubric for evaluating assignments,

focusing on the correct application of the target phrasal verbs. The feedback was provided individually to each student within their respective Telegram group, allowing for personalized guidance. General observations and common errors were also addressed through oral explanations during the video sessions, benefiting all participants.

Following the intervention, a phrasal verb posttest, identical to the pretest, was administered to both the experimental and control groups to measure their learning outcomes. To compare the effectiveness of the two teaching methods, the pretest and posttest scores from both groups were analyzed using an independent samples t-test. This statistical test allowed for a comparison of the mean scores between the experimental and control groups, both before and after the intervention, to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in their phrasal verb learning.

3.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, several statistical techniques were employed. First, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize participant performance on the OQPT and the pretests and posttests for both experimental and control groups. The normality of the data distribution was then assessed by examining skewness and kurtosis values, alongside their standard errors, and visually confirmed through a Normal Probability Plot. Levene's test was conducted to ensure the homogeneity of variances between the groups. The reliability of the research instruments was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, based on a pilot study. Finally, independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the performance of the experimental and control groups on the phrasal pretest and posttest, allowing for an examination of the research question.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Groups

The descriptive analysis of the phrasal pretest and posttest of the experimental group (EG) is presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the EG had a phrasal pretest mean score of 18.48 (SD = 1.706). In addition, the phrasal posttest mean score of the EG was 21.88 (SD = 1.031). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the pretest and posttest scores for EG, respectively. These results

indicate that, on average, the EG demonstrated an improvement in their phrasal verb knowledge from the pretest to the posttest. The increase in the mean score from 18.48 to 21.88 suggests that learning phrasal verbs through songs had a positive impact on their performance. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation in the posttest (1.031) compared to the pretest (1.706) suggests that the scores within the EG became more consistent after the intervention, indicating a more uniform understanding of the taught material. Furthermore, the results of the phrasal pretest and posttest of the control group (CG) are presented in Table 3.

Table 2

The Descriptive Analysis of EG

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD.
Pretest	40	12.71	19.43	18.48	1.706
Posttest	40	13.22	26.77	21.81	1.031
Valid N	40				

Table 3

The Descriptive Analysis of CG

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD.
Pretest	40	12.92	23.88	18.55	1.788
Posttest	40	14.50	22.05	18.09	1.622
Valid N	40				

Figure 1

Pretest of EG

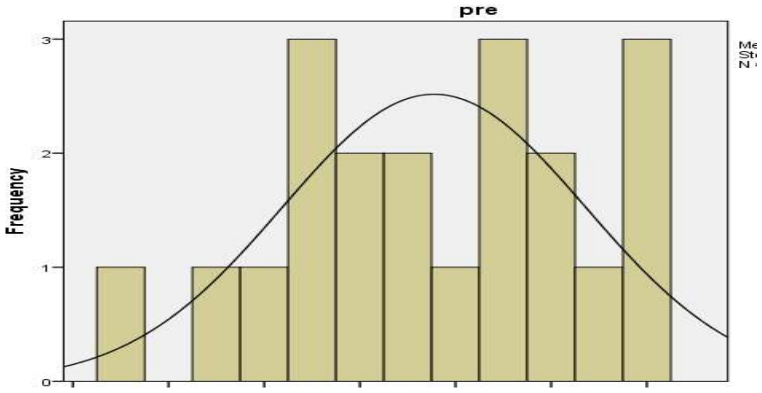


Figure 2

Posttest of EG

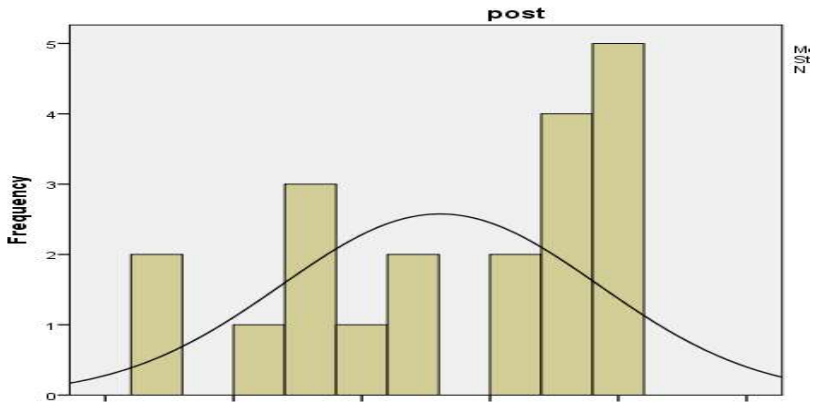
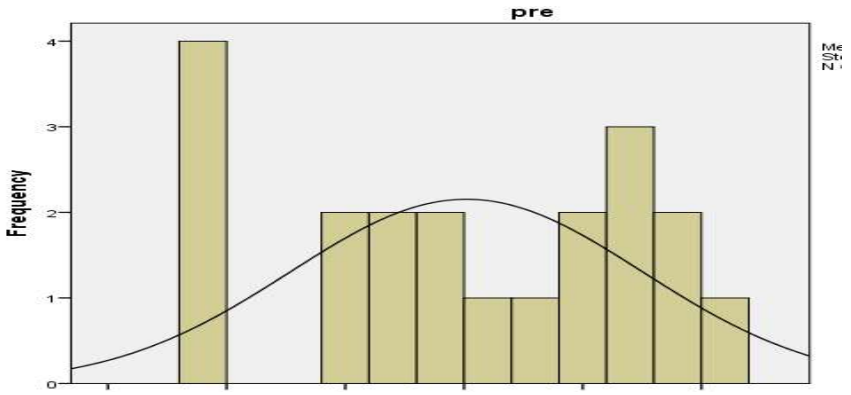


Figure 3

The Phrasal Pretest of the CG

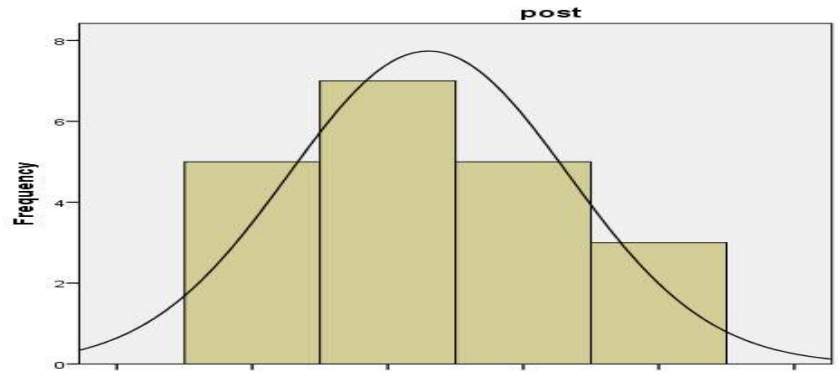


As shown in Table 3, the CG had a mean score of 18.55 (SD = 1.788) on the phrasal pretest, while the mean score on the phrasal posttest for this group was 18.09 (SD = 1.622). The following figures illustrate the phrasal pretest and posttest scores for the group. These results indicate that the CG's performance on phrasal verbs remained relatively stable from the pretest to the posttest, with a slight decrease in the mean score. This small decrease suggests that the traditional teaching method, involving written examples and reading aloud, did not result in a significant improvement in the CG's phrasal verb knowledge during the study period.

Furthermore, the standard deviations for both tests were relatively similar, indicating a consistent level of variability in scores within the CG across both testing periods.

Figure 4

The Phrasal Posttest of CG



4.2 Results

The research question investigated the effect of listening to English songs on the learning of phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate-level language learners. To this end, the performance of the EG and CG was compared in the pretest and posttest via an independent samples t-test. Table 4 presents the results.

As shown in Table 4, the pretest mean of the EG was 18.48 (SD = 1.706), and that of the CG was 18.55 (SD = 1.788). The independent samples t-test revealed that the level of significance (Sig.) was greater than the threshold of 0.05 set for the study (t (78) = X.XXX, p > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of their initial phrasal verb knowledge at the start of the study. Then, the performance of the EG and that of the CG in the phrasal posttest was compared via another independent samples t-test.

As can be seen in Table 5, the phrasal posttest mean of the EG group is 21.81 (SD=1.031), and that of the CG group is 18.09 with a standard deviation of 1.622. Since the level of Sig. is less than 0.05 set for the study, F (1, 78) = 7.226, p<.05, it can be concluded

that generally there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of the students' phrasal performance. Thus, the related hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4

Independent Sample T-test Results in Phrasal Pretest

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
				F	Sig.	t	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG	40	18.48	1.706	7.632	0.001	2.494	78	0.678
CG	40	18.55	1.788					

Table 5

Independent Samples T-test Results for Phrasal in Posttest

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
				F	Sig.	t	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG	40	21.81	1.031	7.226	0.001	2.484	38	0.000
CG	40	18.09	1.622					

5. Discussion

This study investigated the impact of listening to English songs on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of phrasal verbs. The findings revealed a significant positive effect of songs on phrasal verb learning. While previous research has established the general benefits of music in language acquisition, this study provides specific evidence of its effectiveness in teaching phrasal verbs to Iranian EFL learners, a population where such methods are not widely used.

The observed positive effect can be partially explained by how songs facilitate meaningful learning, aligning with Ausubel's theory (1963). In this study, the engaging and

memorable nature of the songs likely allowed learners to create stronger connections between the phrasal verbs and their contexts, leading to better integration into their existing knowledge structures. For example, the emotional impact of songs from movies like The Lion King or Frozen might have created a more powerful and lasting association with the phrasal verbs used within them, compared to rote memorization from written examples.

Furthermore, the study's results support the notion that songs can lower the affective filter, as proposed by Krashen (1982). The enjoyable and stress-free nature of listening to music likely reduced anxiety and increased motivation among the learners. This, in turn, may have created a more conducive learning environment, allowing them to absorb and internalize the phrasal verbs more effectively. The positive feedback received during the activity may have also boosted the students' self-confidence, as they were successful in learning phrasal verbs. This contrasts with traditional classroom settings, where the pressure to perform can sometimes hinder language acquisition.

From a cognitive perspective, the rhythm and rhyme inherent in songs likely enhanced vocabulary retention, as suggested by previous research. The repetitive nature of song lyrics, combined with the melodic structure, may have created a more memorable encoding of the phrasal verbs in the learners' minds. The songs also focus the learner's attention on the overall context. This aligns with Gilbert's (2008) emphasis on prosody, as the rhythm and melody in songs acted as tools to enhance phrasal verb learning, moving beyond simple vocabulary acquisition to incorporating elements of pronunciation and intonation.

The findings also resonate with previous research on musical aptitude and L2 learning (Patel, 2018; Slevc & Miyake, 2006). While this study did not directly measure musical aptitude, the positive results suggest that even without specific musical training, the learners were able to benefit from the musical elements of the songs. The method has proven to be successful with the students.

In short, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on the connection between music and language acquisition. The method has proven to be more successful in this context. The insights provide evidence that the use of songs can provide benefits to the Iranian learners. While further research is needed to explore the role of

individual differences, cultural contexts, and the specific characteristics of effective songs, this study offers encouraging evidence for the integration of music into EFL instruction, particularly for vocabulary acquisition. The cultural context and the limited use of songs in the Iranian context need to be taken into account when applying this method in similar educational settings.

6. Conclusion

In today's educational landscape, the role of a language teacher extends beyond instruction to fostering motivation, particularly as traditional teaching methods may no longer engage students. Songs offer an authentic and creative resource for enhancing phrasal verb learning in EFL classrooms, striking a balance between education and entertainment. This study demonstrated that songs can significantly improve phrasal verb acquisition by reducing anxiety, increasing motivation, and enhancing memory retention, thereby creating a more conducive learning environment. The integration of music not only makes lessons more engaging but also addresses multiple intelligences and fosters cultural awareness.

The findings suggest that learners with a natural inclination towards music may leverage this ability in language acquisition, specifically in phrasal verb learning. This study adds to the growing body of literature that highlights the positive impact of songs on foreign language learning, suggesting that music can be an effective tool for teaching complex linguistic features like phrasal verbs. While some learners may not initially display a strong interest in music, incorporating songs into language instruction could offer benefits across diverse learner profiles.

In addition, the results provide insights for educators and syllabus designers. Teachers can use songs to activate students' background knowledge, boosting their confidence and comprehension, while syllabus designers may consider including more visual and auditory materials to reinforce language learning. Policymakers, such as the Ministry of Education, could also integrate songs into the curriculum to modernize English language instruction. Further research is needed to explore the full potential of songs in enhancing EFL learners' classroom performance, but the findings of this study underscore their value as both a cognitive and emotional learning tool.

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of using English songs to teach phrasal verbs to Iranian intermediate EFL learners. While these findings are encouraging, several avenues for future research warrant particular attention. First, understanding which specific elements of songs are most effective for language learning. Isolating the effects of rhythm, melody, and lyrics will allow for more targeted song-based instruction. For instance, do simpler melodies paired with complex lyrics optimize vocabulary acquisition? Second, determining the generalizability of these findings across cultures. Cross-cultural studies are needed to assess whether song-based instruction is universally effective or influenced by cultural factors like musical preferences and learning styles. Finally, investigating how individual learner characteristics (age, proficiency, learning styles) interact with music-based learning. Understanding these interactions will enable more personalized instruction. Addressing these questions will significantly advance our understanding of music's role in language acquisition and inform the design of more effective teaching methods.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) certify/certifies that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in the present research paper.

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