

**Using Song Lyrics Activities to Develop  
Preparatory Stage Pupils' EFL Listening Skills**

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## Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the effect of song lyrics activities on developing EFL listening skills of preparatory stage pupils. Sixty-two first year preparatory stage pupils were randomly assigned into two groups; experimental (n=31) and control (n=31). The experimental group used song lyrics activities in EFL listening instruction while the control group underwent regular listening instruction. The findings indicated that pupils of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group in their listening skills.

**Keywords:** Song lyrics activities, EFL Listening skills, Preparatory stage pupils.

### ملخص عربي

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على تأثير استخدام الانشطة القائمة على كلمات الأغاني الموسيقية لتنمية مهارات الاستماع في اللغة الانجليزية لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الاعدادية. وتمثلت عينة الدراسة في 62 تلميذا في الصف الاول الاعدادي وتم تقسيمهم عشوانيا الى مجموعتين؛ تجريبي (ن = 31) وضابطة (ن = 31). استخدمت المجموعة التجريبية أنشطة قائمة على كلمات الأغاني الموسيقية في تنمية الاستماع للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في حين خضعت المجموعة الضابطة لأنشطة الاستماع التقليدية. أشارت النتائج إلى أن تلاميذ المجموعة التجريبية تفوقوا في أدائهم على المجموعة الضابطة في مهارات الاستماع لديهم.

## 1. Introduction

Listening comprehension plays a key role in facilitating language learning. The importance of listening in language learning can hardly be overestimated. Through reception, we internalize linguistic information without which we could not produce language (Lynch 2010, Siegel 2015). The importance of listening for foreign language acquisition has been underlined by many authors (Goh 2002 , Abrantes De Andrade 2006 , Bazorgian 2013, Gray 2017). Not only is listening comprehension important at the beginning stages of second language acquisition, it appears to be crucially important for advanced level learners as well.

Listening is a natural process progresses only as the learner becomes more proficient in the use of the target language. However, listening is intricate in the overall learning process of a foreign language as listening is considered today a complex activity and a key factor in the language acquisition process(Krashen, Terrell et al. 1984, Saviile-Troike 2012).

In this sense, it is important for teachers to take these factors in mind so that learners are able to convey meaning from the listening material in the target language. Richards and Renandya (2002), Richards (2008) state the importance of providing comprehensible input dealing with listening tasks for learners to develop language competences and abilities. Hence, the teaching of this skill should be accompanied by comprehensible input, which allows learners of the target language to connect what they see with their background knowledge for them to succeed in their process of language learning (Krashen 1985, Gray 2017, Graham and Santos 2015). Predicting language from context in different listening situations can be facilitated if visual support is used in complement with the listening material. Therefore, it is essential for EFL learners to be presented to supportive listening materials such as song lyrics.

Just as in many English teaching situations, the teachers play a key role in using the song lyrics as an aid for language teaching. They have the prime responsibility for creating a successful language learning environment. The teacher should take advantage of the power of song lyrics as it is a useful aid for him. Choosing song lyrics requires thinking about a few viewpoints. For example, comprehensibility of vocabulary, related structures and commonality so learners can comprehend significantly more than it was already expected (Villada 2009). In the foreign language classroom, listening is by all accounts the most difficult skill to be learned in light of the fact that the information received by learners from the song lyrics can be misshaped relying upon elements such as sounds, accents, articulation, stress and pitch.

Despite its significance in everyday life communication, and educational process, listening has been the dismissed expertise in research, assessment and instructing in the foreign language classroom. Abdel - Halim (2004) said that the pupils become unable to listen and most of them fail to respond correctly and naturally. Most pupils are not able to understand what they listen to and unable to establish an effective dialogue, although they can read the text fluently (El-Samouly 2007). Lihua (2002), Guo and Robin (2006) found that traditionally, teachers of English focused on passing on knowledge. The attention was on written examination scores and less attention was given to cultivating pupils' listening abilities. However, in recent years, there has been an increased focus on listening ability because

of its perceived importance in language learning and teaching (Gilakjani and Ahmadi 2011, Gilakjani and Sabour 2016). Therefore, the current study tries to investigate the effect of using song lyrics activities to improve pupils' listening comprehension.

### **1.1 Context of the problem**

The researcher conducted a pilot study to document the problem. A test, designed by the researcher, was administered to 50 pupils in the first grade of the preparatory stage (See Appendix 1). This pilot study revealed that the pupils have difficulty in understanding the audio messages or distinguishing between different sounds. The pupils could not understand what they listen to well and therefore, they failed to respond correctly and naturally. The pilot study assured the weakness of pupils' EFL listening comprehension skills.

### **1.2 Aim of the study**

The current study aims to develop some EFL listening skills of the first-year preparatory stage pupils through using song lyrics activities.

### **1.3 Questions of the Study**

The current study attempts to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of using song lyrics activities on developing first year preparatory stage pupils' EFL listening skills?

Out of this question, the following sub-questions are stated:

2. To what extent does the implementation of song lyrics activities develop the sound discrimination skills of first year preparatory pupils?
3. To what extent does the implementation of song lyrics activities develop the grammatical structure and forms of first year preparatory pupils?
4. To what extent does the implementation of song lyrics activities develop the comprehension skill of first year preparatory pupils?

### **1.4 Hypotheses of the Study**

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group regarding overall EFL listening comprehension skills in favor of the experimental group.

- 2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group regarding sound discrimination skills in favor of the experimental group.
- 3- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group regarding grammatical structure and forms in favor of the experimental group.
- 4- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group regarding the comprehension skill in favor of the experimental group.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The current study is significant as it directs teachers' attention to the importance of listening skills as learners' lack of sound discrimination and grammatical structure skills deeply limits their ability to comprehend or express themselves. Also, the current study sheds light on the use of song lyrics activities in a way that could encourage pupils to easily recognize sounds and comprehend the audio message. Besides, teachers could also benefit from song lyrics activities to help their pupils listen effectively and be able to take part in oral communication.

### **1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

The study is confined to:

- 1 -A sample of (62) of first year preparatory school pupils.
- 2 -Some listening comprehension skills.
- 3- The second semester of the academic year (2016- 2017).

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

#### **1.7.1 Song lyrics activities**

Žogota (2011 ), Boothe and West (2015), García (2015), Davis and Kearney ( 2015 ) defined song lyrics as a set of words that make up a song, normally comprising verses and melodies. A song is a piece of music with words sung. In the current study, song lyrics activities are operationally defined as different ways of using words with supporting music to help 1<sup>st</sup> year preparatory stage pupils practise particular grammar points and themes in EFL teaching and learning context.

### **1.7.2 EFL Listening comprehension skills**

In the current study, listening comprehension skills are essential to complete the process of identifying and understanding the implicit and explicit meanings of words and sentences of spoken language (Tuan and Loan 2010, Zhang 2013, Siegel 2015).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 EFL Listening Comprehension Skill**

Vandergrift (2002) defined listening as a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Steinberg (2007), Mustafa, Celik et al. (2014) characterized listening process as the ability of one person understanding another through sense, aural organs allotting an interpretation to the message and understanding it.

Myhill, Jones et al. (2006), Mai, Ngoc et al. (2014) described listening as a set of activities that includes a person's ability to catch, perceive, separate, or even overlook certain data. It has likewise been considered to contain intricate and dynamic procedures that are included in phonetic information, individual expectations, cognitive processing skills, and world knowledge.

Listening is the capacity to hear mindfully and to comprehend what others are stating. Compelling listening depends totally on the connection between many segments which encourage us to comprehend the entire message in setting, for example, accent comprehension, sentence structure, vocabulary learning, and the way words are articulated (Vandergrift 2003, Thaut 2005). Grammar and structures were mentioned above for their significance of listening because as learners grow, they begin to formally utilize language using grammar to linguistically express themselves right (Kendeou, Lynch et al. 2006, Newton 2013, Nair, Koo et al. 2014). Vocabulary learning is additionally useful in the listening comprehension process in light of the fact that learners won't have the capacity to partake in a discussion without understanding the words they are listening to (Graham 2006, Gilakjani and Ahmadi 2011, Florit, Roch et al. 2013, İnceçay and Koçoğlu 2016).

## **2.2 Teaching Listening Using Song Lyrics**

There are many ways in teaching listening in the classroom. Using song lyrics is not only to help the teacher to teach listening but also to provide an interesting way for the pupils to achieve the learning goals. Songs have been purposefully selected and incorporated into EFL classroom activities so as to provide a relaxing, enjoyable, and non-threatening atmosphere in the classrooms (Saricoban and Metin 2010, Žogota 2011, Sevik 2012, Sevik 2012, Rezaei and Ahour 2015), helping the pupils raise and maintain their attention and interests (Orlova 2003, Ariani 2007, Ornerová 2009, Gilakjani and Ahmadi 2011, Millington 2011, İnceçay and Koçoğlu 2016, Kahraman 2008). Moreover, learning can be substantiated as a result of using song lyrics as a guide to memory. The iterative melodic patterns and rhymed song lyrics make cyclic exposures and enable the learners hold the learning of etymological components in the memory. Therefore, the automaticity of EFL listening skills can be developed (Boothe and West 2015, Sukmawati 2015). The three-fundamental intellectual, phonetic, and affective advantages have clarified song lyrics educational usage of encouraging and facilitating EFL listening skills development.

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) assured that listening involves complex cognitive activities in which learners interact with a speaker to build understanding within a contextual framework of knowledge and experiences. Therefore, when learners are made mindful of the variables that influence the listening comprehension process, they will probably perceive their own particular listening capacities and take part in exercises that set them up to be successful listeners (Mai, Ngoc et al. 2014). The aim of the song lyrics activities is supporting learners' interpretation of the text and avoiding listening failure (Lorenzutti 2014). These activities can be done before, while, and after listening.

## **2.3 Guidelines for Song Lyrics Selection**

There are some guidelines for using song lyrics inside the EFL classroom advocated by researchers (Abbott, 2002; Coromina, 1993; Lems, 2001; Lynch, 2005). Among the recommended criteria for song lyrics selection, the prime concerns are clarity, lexical variety, and content appropriateness (Chiang, 2003; Lems, 2001; Orlova, 2003; Lynch, 2007). With respect to sound-related lucidity, the lyrics ought to be obviously

enunciated and effectively recognizable, not submerged in the instrumental music (Abbott, 2002; Chiang, 2003; Coromina, 1993; Lems, 2001; Lynch, 2005).

The lyrics' vocabulary should be varied and suitable for learners' proficiency level (Abbott, 2002; Chiang, 2003; Coromina, 1993; Lems, 2001). The lyrics theme ought to be suitable to the age and interests of the learners (Abbott, 2002; Chiang, 2003). For the emphasis on developing listening skills, lyrics with direct rhythm, suitable reiteration and less confused syntactic structures are suggested (Abbott, 2002; Coromina, 1993; Chiang, 2003) for orally practicing important pronunciation skills, and initiating dialogues for discussion. Songs are an excellent form of listening input for a wide range of comprehension tasks because they are normally short and in general, use simple natural language, and contain repetitions (Goh, 2000:44). However, the most frequent song activities appeared as listening tests of dictation or gaps filling, as noted by Lorenzutti (2014), who urged more variable and stimulating ways to design dynamic activities to engage students in meaningful and enjoyable learning.

#### **2.4 Song lyrics activities dimensions**

The learners energetically and cheerfully learn the lyrics when they are singing, performing, and listening to songs (Bahar 2000, Abbott 2002, Botella 2009, Craig 2009, Falk, Rathcke et al. 2014). Additionally, song lyrics are valuable for learning vocabulary, phonics, structures, and sentence patterns (Schön, Gordon et al. 2005, Ehsanzadeh 2012, Aldera and Mohsen 2013, Florit, Roch et al. 2013, Newton 2013, Gilakjani and Sabour 2016). They can be used to strengthen language in light of the fact that the rhythm and tone of these lyrics get added emphasis (Sukmawati 2015, Davis and Kearney 2015), so they can enhance EFL learners' perceptual sound discrimination and pronunciation of certain vocabulary and expressions. Song lyrics usually consider pinpoint topics that easily highlight lexical items and sentence patterns in meaningful contexts reflecting the connection between structures and communicative functions (Abbott 2002, Saricoban and Metin 2010). Additionally, lyrics can shift from various genres and registers; accordingly, they can outline the language styles from colloquial speech in spoken language to highly poetic language (Rost 2002, Lynch 2010, Žogota 2011).



**Visual literacy dimension**

Song lyrics have for quite some time been viewed as a piece of literary writing. As per old Greek history, lyric poems were characterized as verses that were regularly associated with an instrument. What the Europeans depicted as poem accompanied by music, the Chinese described as the expressive lyrics and characterized as the poetry of this era (Boothe and West 2015, García 2015 ). It can be inferred that most lyrics can be viewed as a type of poetry today (Žogota 2011 , Boothe and West 2015). In this sense, visual literacy appears to be the way by which people decode symbols for them to make sense of what they are listening (Buck 2001, Villada 2009). Visualization supplements listening comprehension by helping learning deciphering data making a total picture of the surrounding context (Peachey 2002, Villada 2009, Saricoban and Metin 2010, Kahraman 2008, Davis and Kearney 2015 ) .

Most communicative and spoken forms are accompanied by visual input; this is an important variable in language comprehension. Consequently, song lyrics can be an exceptionally effective resource in the classroom for many reasons. Additionally, as it is highlighted by Stokes (2001), Sparks (2008), Villada (2009), Mustafa, Celik et al. (2014) song lyrics give learners the opportunity to see things as they happen, so they can become a valuable tool to enhance the learners' visual memory. Moreover, it gives opportune data into the classroom context, which enables learners to open themselves to different elements in the teaching learning context that numerous other learning devices do not offer such as events, persons, things and places. In that sense, the utilization of song lyrics is by all accounts an awesome help for EFL educators in empowering and encouraging the language.

Additionally, as it is stated by Burt (1999), Villada (2009), (Žogota 2011) song lyrics material can be used for a variety of instructional settings in the classroom. They are useful to present the target language, and to provide illustration of concepts. In addition, they give the chance to learners to realize non-verbal communication clues in the meantime they perceive vital phonetics aspects of words, for example, stress, pitch, and mood for learners to completely grasp the expected message of what they listen. Besides, the utilization of song lyrics in the classroom is likewise essential

and academic in light of the fact that the using visuals can enable learners to anticipate data, to surmise thoughts and grasp the world that is brought into the classroom through song lyrics.

### **Comprehensible input dimension**

Language learners acquire the grammatical forms and vocabulary by receiving and comprehending language that is to some extent beyond their current language proficiency level (Pourhosein and Sabouri 2016, Gray 2017). By predicting, guessing and inferring, and associating the meaning of linguistic information involved in the speech act context, learners are able to comprehend grammar and vocabulary that would otherwise be very difficult for them to comprehend (Krashen 1985, Kendeou, Lynch et al. 2006, Kiviy 2007). In this sense, it is important to expose foreign language learners to comprehensible input while carrying out the listening tasks dealing with songs so that they are able to make connections between what they watch and what they read to which would lead them to a better understanding of the listening material (Sukmawati 2015, Rezaei and Ahour 2015, Graham and Santos 2015).

In order to talk about the help, provided from any song lyrics material in reference to teaching the listening skill in a foreign language, it is imperative to talk about the listening process and more importantly about listening comprehension. EFL learners face some factors that can hinder their learning process such as obscure acoustic information that is related to knowing sounds and phonemes, or understanding stress and intonation. Semantic data and inspiration can accelerate the learning process because learners need to comprehend what is listened to apply such learnt information to a genuine situation away from feeling frustrated.

Song lyrics activities in the classroom provide comprehensible input by designing tasks which are meaningful for the learners, or lead them to predict language from the context by eliciting information from the learners. In relation to the teachers' instruction, Burt (1999), Sparks (2008) suggest that teachers think of using a song lyrics as a three-part lesson, including pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities :before presenting the song lyrics, the teacher must engage the learners' interest in what they will be doing and prepare them to do it successfully. The instructor advises the

learners and guides them to find the reason behind learning the song lyrics. This orientation can be done through a pre-reading activity for discussing new vocabulary. The EFL teacher ought to clarify complex points, energize dialog, and develop follow-up exercises whether they are incorporated into the students' books or materials designed by the teacher accompany the song lyrics.

### **Audio Dimension**

In the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, audio material seems to be a good resource to expose learners to the target language because it provides several opportunities for learners to interact in real language scenarios. Osada (2004), Morales (2008), Villada (2009), Newton (2013) argue that using songs for teaching purposes provides real use of language due to the fact that the lyrics represent authentic examples of English structures and real use of language.

That is why working with songs takes a paramount relevance for the teaching of languages as they provide meaningful content for EFL learners to learn many aspects of the target language in regards to language usage in a real context (Thaut 2005, Sigurðardóttir 2012). Using music and lyrics provides an experience that assisted in the development of listening skills because the tone and effect added by the music to the lyrics allowed learners to focus beyond just the words to the underlying emotions expressed by the singer (Schön, Gordon et al. 2005, Morales 2008, Pasanen 2010, Sağlam 2010).

### **2.5 Song lyrics activities in a foreign language context**

In a foreign language context, song lyrics activities can be utilized to enhance the learning situation. Bahar (2000), Bazorgian (2013) indicated that most classroom song activities concentrate on lyrics. Through these exercises, learners find the normal compacting of the English language discourse when utilized as a guide activity that can improve the listening comprehension process (Lems 2001, Legg 2009). The usefulness of implementing song lyrics in a foreign language context mainly depends in the activities teachers give to learners in order to better develop their skills; otherwise the song lyrics material loses effectiveness. Song lyrics activities are what Rubin (1999), Sağlam (2010) define as the role that teachers play

in preparing the learner to structure their own language experience. Rubin suggests two types of song lyrics activities which take place in the classroom environment while preparing learners to carry out the song lyrics activities done in class for the listening practice :Teachers can arrange lessons so that learners encounter certain learning experiences. Teachers can help learners to connect various parts of their experience.

Contextual clues to be offered with visual support accompanied by song lyrics can prompt learners' thinking through prediction, and speculation leading to better understanding. Song lyrics can inspire learners' interests and motivation as instructing or testing circumstances song lyrics enhance listening materials' clarity by making a strong connection between the learned material and its practical application(Stokes 2001, Ho, Cheung et al. 2003).

Different components that can contrarily influence a listening class are learners' low inspiration and absence of interest. In this manner, teachers who want to enhance learners' enthusiasm and motivation in the EFL classroom ought to choose activities that are alluring providing them with a reason for listening and picked topics as per their school level and reality. Abrantes De Andrade (2006) guarantees that developing listening skills need making a compelling lesson that requires utilizing the right sort of exercises and activities that ought to be displayed in a sound arrangement.

Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988), Abrantes De Andrade (2006 ) show that English as a language to be taught has brought us poetry and lyrics that resurrect our affection and respect while bringing delight and beauty to our minds. In other words, teachers ought to pick the suitable song for their classroom and utilize some strategies to set up the test to the learners in favorable circumstances in the learning process (Saricoban and Metin 2010).

## **2.6 Using song lyrics activities to improve listening comprehension**

Pasanen (2010 ) pointed out that the most natural way of using song lyrics activities in teaching English is quite obviously practicing listening comprehension. Song lyrics activities can be used for practicing how to concentrate during listening comprehension: the teacher can ask pupils to

listen carefully to find out a particular detail about the lyrics, e.g. what time of the year the song lyrics activities are set in. The lines of the song lyrics activities can also be mixed up and pupils asked to mark the correct order with a number (Salcedo 2010, Leivo and Rikkola 2011 ). The ways of checking understanding of the song lyrics activities are numerous. Possibilities include multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, or right or wrong statements about the song lyrics; the pupils can be asked to organize mixed up verses of the song lyrics, to analyze the message of the song lyrics, to identify wrong words inserted in the text or to repeat the contents of the song lyrics. With a narrative-style song lyrics pupils can also be asked to reconstruct the story after listening (Murphey 1992, Becker 2001, Ho, Cheung et al. 2003).

One very popular way of using song lyrics activities for listening comprehension is to omit some words from the lyrics in order to leave gaps which the pupils can fill in. This is a particularly good method because it is similar to the way in which pupils in real life listen to song lyrics: they try to figure out the parts of the lyrics they cannot understand straight away by listening to the song lyrics repeatedly (McMullen and Saffran 2004, Koelsch, Gunter et al. 2005, Leivo and Rikkola 2011 ). Pupils can also, before listening, guess what words could go in the gaps and then check if they were right by listening to the song lyrics. Furthermore, filling a cloze exercise can function as an introduction to new listening or a new grammar point.

Marking the words frequency is a way of working with song lyrics while listening to crossing out letters that are not articulated and discovering homonyms, equivalent words, or antonyms (Črnčec, Wilson et al. 2006). Song lyrics can also be used for creating an information gap exercise in which pupils have to write down as much of the lyrics as they can while listening to it and then try to figure out the missing parts with the help of a partner (Engh 2013, Keskinen 2014).

Kahraman (2008) also proved the effectiveness of using song lyrics activities to improve listening comprehension. The study investigated utilizing song lyrics in EFL lessons by asking learners to fill in the blanks in

various genres provided in three listening cycles. Clearness of articulation was highly recommended by the study findings to enhance listening comprehension. On the other hand, the origin of the singer does not seem to affect the comprehension. Analysis of song lyrics activities in more varied genres may contribute to the field.

The process for learning these skills can be enhanced. The use of music and song lyrics for teaching active listening skills, according to participants, allow for the deeper understanding of the practice experience. Creative methods have been shown to be effective in the development of a variety of skills such as listening (Villalba and Redmond 2008, Iarussi, Tyler et al. 2013, Davis and Pereira 2016). This conceptualization provided participants with a better ability to express reflective statements that relate to the emotional content in a more genuine and consequential manner (Stinchfield 2006, Villalba and Redmond 2008, Pereira and Smith-Adcock 2013). Apart from the recognition of this teaching tool as a creative means for enhancing and applying active listening and reflective statements, an important aspect was the increased confidence noted by the participants in developing these skills (Stinchfield 2006, Anderson, Ogles et al. 2009).

Most children enjoy song lyrics activities as they increase their interest in learning a new language in a very entertaining way. Educators need to be willing to incorporate song lyrics activities in their lessons in order to better enhance their pupils' learning (Sigurdardóttir, 2012). Kirsch (2008), (Sevik 2012) demonstrate that using song lyrics activities in EFL classes has many benefits especially with young learners as they advance their positive emotions. The lyrics rhythmical and repeated nature encourage and quicken learning, and they are great methods for learners to practise more sounds, utilize new word sentences, and structures in a safe and pleasant way without feeling shy. According to Sundqvist (2009), Batluk (2015), song lyrics activities add to learners' self-efficacy as mastering lyrics in conjunction with the rhymes reinforce their enthusiasm for learning and encourage them to contribute intellectually physically, and emotionally (Sevik 2012). In view of their restricted capacity to focus, young learners require assortment of exercise. Song lyrics activities help kids to learn in light of the fact that they give a safe, non-debilitating setting inside

which to learn new sounds as lyrics activities give great chances to reiteration and practice which would help learning and prompt nature, so youngsters feel confident with a language other than their native language(Sevik 2012).

Morales (2008) argued that using song lyrics for teaching purposes provides genuine utilization of English as a foreign language because of the way lyrics represent real English words and structures. That is why working with song lyrics activities takes a paramount relevance for the teaching of languages. Song lyrics activities can be seen as a powerful teaching tool because it helps keep children focused and centered on the task at hand(Chen and Chen 2009). Teachers who embrace a variety of learning activities that appeal to multiple learning modalities are more likely to achieve early success for all pupils and song lyrics activities can help accomplish that goal(Lorenzutti 2014, Mai, Ngoc et al. 2014).

Song lyrics are used as a carrier when the melody acts as a vehicle for the words. Words of songs are easily remembered because of a strong signal connection and then often used as educational tools(Vossoughi and Morad 2010). Song lyrics are considered to be auditory when children hear the melody and words to a song, and it is kinesthetic/ tactile when the children move to the beat/rhythm of the song lyrics activities. It is tactual in how children elicit emotion to what they are hearing, and it is visual if lyrics to words are written out for children to read (Brown and Brown 2008). Song lyrics can be seen as a powerful teaching tool because it helps keep children focused and centered on the task at hand (Hartini 2013). Song-based activities can be classified according to the three stages during the song instruction process.

### **Pre-Song Lyrics Activities**

The teacher can use some song lyrics activities to set up the listening instruction. A few inquiries concerning the song title and content can be first introduced for the learners to consider. Chen (2014) used song lyrics to improve learners' grammatical structure achievement and enhance their motivation to English language learning. To begin the class sessions with song lyrics, learners have to figure out the theme of the song after initially

presenting the song lyrics, the meaning of new words, and their attitude towards it (Chen 2014). This discussion helps to trigger their prior knowledge, explain how they perceive the song and establish a meaningful listening experience (Pourhosein and Sabouri 2016).

### **While-Song Lyrics Activities**

The aim of using song lyrics activities at this stage is to concentrate the learners' consideration on listening to the lyrics and understand the song meaning. Lee (2005), Rahbar and Khodabakhsh (2013) introduced the song colored lyric transcripts and animated visuals to focus on the relation between sound and meaning. Hassani, Rahmani et al. (2014) utilized song lyrics to teach vocabulary, so the learners could see the lyrics while listening to the song by including a copy of the lyric with some deleted new words for the students to fill the spaces checking answers.

Aldera and Mohsen (2013), Rengifo (2009) and Tung (2012) disclosed how to use song lyrics in EFL classroom for improving pronunciation skills, underlying the importance of gap filling exercises for recognizing and honing the phonetic points of interest in natural settings. Arevalo (2010) requested that the learners fill in the missing words from the glossary of the missing words, when they listen to the song. Lin (2010) discussed the theme of the song and clarified new words for the learners through rehearsal; thereby facilitating discussion. Alipour, Gorjian, and Zafari (2012) additionally revealed that preparing a blank-gapped worksheet for learners can improve their listening experience in the classroom.

### **Post-Song Lyrics Activities**

Discussion activities are the main activity type after the while- song listening stage. Ahola (2005) requested the students to analyse and discuss the lyric. Beasley & Chuang (2008) encouraged the students to summarize the song themes, compare cultural similarities and differences, and complete some survey questions about their time on these songs, their song fondness, and level of comprehension on these songs. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) requested the students to say some song lyrics by imitation, while, Abdullah & Beting (2013) asked them to listen to the song chosen and gave a brief analysis making a comparison on the level of appreciation before and after analyzing the lyrics of the song chosen. Alipour, Gorjian et al. (2012),



Hassani, Rahmani et al. (2014) included writing activities for the students to practise on newly words, such as giving synonyms and definitions for words, making sentences, and giving a summary of the song story.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study were sixty-two first year preparatory stage pupils in Kafr Elmesselha, Shebin Elkom directorate, Menoufia Governorate in the academic year 2016/2017. One class (N=31) was randomly assigned to be the experimental group that was exposed to song lyrics activities and the other class was assigned to be the control group that received regular instruction.

#### **3.2. Instruments of the Study**

##### **3.2.1. A Pre-Post Listening Skills Test**

###### **3.2.1.1 Aim of the Test**

It aimed to test the pupils' performance on the intended listening skills which the study was concerned with (Sound discrimination skills, Connotation, Grammatical structures and forms, and Comprehension skills). Based on the observational checklist of listening comprehension skill, the language elements, the ministry objectives and reviewing previous studies, a listening comprehension test was developed (See Appendix 1). This test was used as a pre-and post-test. As a pre-test, it was used to measure the pupils' level in the identified listening comprehension skills before experimentation and to make sure that pupils in both groups (the control group and the experimental group) were at the same level before starting the experiment. The progress achieved by the experimental group (if any) could, therefore, be attributed to the treatment they had been exposed to. As a post-test, the listening comprehension test was used to investigate the effect of the experimental treatment in developing the listening comprehension skills.

###### **3.2.1.2. Test Description**

The first part of the test aimed to measure the pupils' ability to discriminate between English sounds. It consisted of 10 items. It had two questions where each one included five items. The first question was for discriminating consonant blends. The second question was for

discriminating the final (-ed). In the first question, the pupils were asked to listen to some words containing some consonant blends/sounds and to write the missing sounds. In the second question, the pupils were asked to listen to five items; each item had two words. They had to circle (true) if they had the same pronunciation of final (-ed) or (false) if they had different pronunciation of final (-ed).

The second part of the test was for measuring the pupils' ability to recognize word and sentence meaning. This part included only the vocabulary items found in the school textbook. It consisted of two questions:

The first question had ten items. Each item had three options (pictures). The pupils had to circle the picture that matched the words they heard.

The second question had four items. The pupils had to listen to four sentences and write the number of the sentence next to the suitable picture.

The last part of the test aimed to measure the pupils' ability to determine correct grammatical structures and forms. This part had two questions:

The first question consisted of five items. Each item had three options (pictures). The pupils had to hear each sentence and circle the picture that matched the sentences they heard.

The second question consisted of eight sentences. The pupils had to hear them, find the mistakes and correct them.

### **3.2.1.3. Test Validity**

The test was given to a panel of jury in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to judge its validity. The panel of jury agreed that the test is valid and measures the intended skills.

### **3.2.1.4. Test Reliability**

To calculate the reliability of the listening comprehension test, it was administered to a sample of first year preparatory stage pupils. test reliability took through:

Cronbach's alpha where the scores of listening comprehensions test was calculated. Cronbach's alpha = 0.87 that means the test is highly reliable.

Retest of listening comprehension test and calculating the relation between the two applications which proved to be  $r = 0.81$

The previous results indicate that the test was reliable.

### 3.2.1.5. Pre-testing

In order to investigate the equivalence of the two groups (the experimental and the control groups) in the pre-test, independent samples t-test was used to identify the significance of difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in listening comprehension skills. Table (1) shows the t-values.

**Table (1): The Significance of Differences between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control groups on the Pre-test**

Skill	Experimental Group		Control Group		t-Value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
phonology	5.516	1.338	5.387	0.760	0.467	Not Significant
grammar	4.967	1.328	4.871	0.846	0.342	Not Significant
Vocabulary and comprehension	8.290	0.692	8.129	0.991	0.743	Not Significant
Total	18.774	1.802	13.387	2.060	0.787	Not Significant

It is clear from the above table that the calculated values of "t" were not significant which meant that there were no differences between the mean scores of the two groups. Thus; the two groups (the experimental group and the control groups) were equivalent before experimentation.

## 3.3 Teacher's Guide

### 3.3.1 Aim of the Teacher's guide

This teacher's guide aimed at developing some EFL listening comprehension skills of the first-year preparatory stage pupils.

### 3.3.2 The Content of the Teacher's guide

It consists of three units of the text book "Hello! English" for the first-year preparatory stage. The teacher's guide is divided into three

sections (Appendix 2):

- 1- Communicative functions
- 2- Grammatical structure
- 3- Phonology and vocabulary

### **3.3.3 Implementation of the Song lyrics activities**

The song lyrics activities were designed to evaluate how the application of song lyrics activities in a foreign language classroom could impact the pupils' listening development. In addition to appraise if any advance was encouraged by the contribution of this material. The listening tasks were presented in three phases (some time recently, while, and after). In the pre-listening phase, the researcher started with the clarification of the obscure vocabulary as a warm up exercise and to activate the learners' prior knowledge so as to acclimate the learners with the new vocabulary contained into the song they listen to. At that point, the researcher trained the learners to listen to the song without viewing the lyrics for them to extricate as much data as expected in the form of vocabulary, grammatical structures and some other sort of language expressions contained into the song.

In the while-listening phase, the researcher derived data from learners about the theme and content of the song keeping in mind the end goal to check learners' understanding. After completing the song for the first time, the researcher played the song again enabling the learners to see the lyrics encouraging them to focus on the connection between the listening material and the Written lyrics. At last, so as to check the level of the learners' comprehension, they were given an activity (i.e. fill-in-the spaces, matching, sorting out, and so forth., for every session) for them to practise in the light of the song lyrics they learnt.

## **4. Results**

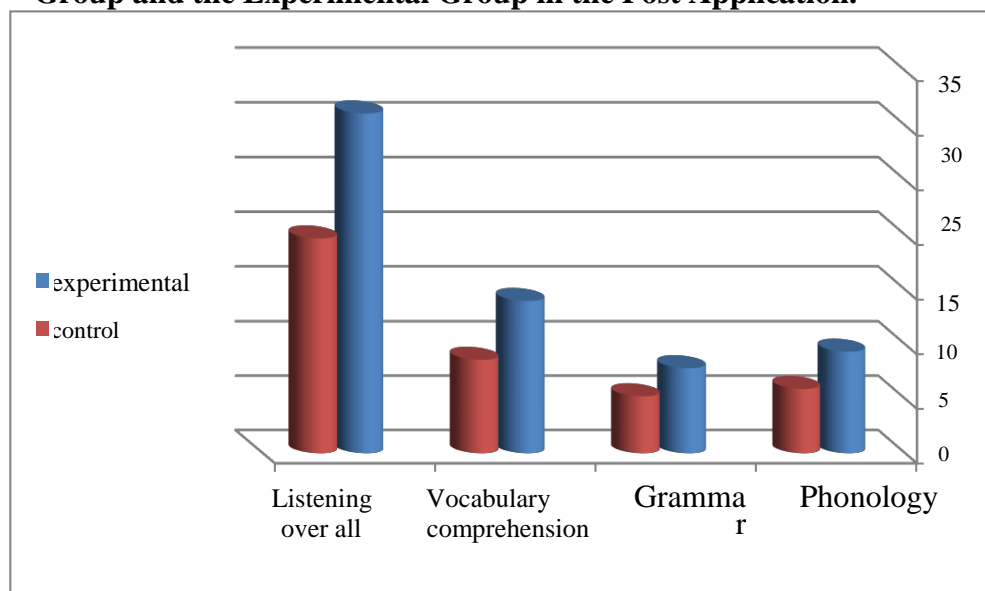
Each hypothesis had been tested by following the seven stages of the model which were as follows; the preliminary analysis, the exploratory analysis, the performativity analysis, the affirmative analysis, the iterative analysis, the frequency analysis and the integrative analysis. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version16) was used to analyze the pupils' scores on the pre-and post-tests. Results are shown in the light of the study hypotheses and questions. The listening test was administered as a posttest to both groups. The researcher and another scorer used the rubric to rate students' answers.

Table (2) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. It shows that the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group regarding all the listening skills which the study is concerned with.

**Table (2): The Significance of Differences between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control groups on the Post test**

Skill	Experimental Group		Control Group		t-Value	$\eta^2$	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Phonology	9.322	0.908	5.903	0.870	15.133	0.79	Sig. at (0.01)
Grammar	7.806	1.424	5.225	0.845	8.677	0.56	Sig. at (0.01)
Vocabulary and Comprehension	13.967	0.179	8.580	1.148	25.810	0.91	Sig. at (0.01)
TOTAL	31.096	2.196	19.677	2.286	20.056	0.87	Sig. at (0.01)

**Figure (1): Bar Charts of the Mean Scores of Pupils of the Control Group and the Experimental Group in the Post Application.**



It is clear from the above table that the calculated value of "t" (20.056) was greater than the tabulated value of "t" at 60 degrees of freedom and significant level "0.01". This meant that the difference between the mean scores of the two groups reached to the level of statistical significance. In order to investigate the educational importance of the results and its educational importance and effect; the value of ETA squared ( $\eta^2$ ) had been calculated as its value (ETA squared) was 0.87. ETA squared value which was significant to the educational importance and the practical significance had exceeded the results in the psychological researches which were 0.14. In the light of this, it can be said that 87% of the variations between the scores of pupils in the Listening comprehension could be due to differences of teaching treatment which the two groups were exposed to. There was educational importance for using the teacher's guide based on song lyrics activities for improving and developing listening comprehension skills. Thus, the hypothesis was accepted which indicated that there are statistically significant differences between the post-test mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in overall listening comprehension in favor of the experimental group.

#### 4.1 Interpretation of Results

The results of the study showed the effectiveness of song lyrics activities in developing EFL listening comprehension skills of preparatory stage pupils. Song lyrics activities helped the experimental group pupils improve their pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. As a result of the lyrics being presented along with the song, pupils were able to make a connection between what a word looks and sounds like. In the light of the findings of this study, it can be stated that using song lyrics activities were effective in developing pupils' listening comprehension skills and very beneficial for the students in order to facilitate learning English in the experimental group compared to control group's results. The results of the current study might be due to the following:

1. The visual support of song lyrics supplements listening comprehension by helping learning deciphering data making a total picture of the surrounding context.

2. The tone and effect added by the music to the lyrics allowed learners to focus beyond just the words to the underlying emotions expressed by the singer.
3. Contextual clues offered with visual support accompanied by song lyrics prompted learners' thinking through prediction, and speculation leading to better understanding.
4. Song lyrics inspire learners' interests and motivation as in instructing or testing circumstances song lyrics enhance listening materials' clarity by making a strong connection between the learned materials and practical application.
5. Song lyrics activities can be seen as a powerful teaching tool because they help keep children focused and centered on the task at hand. Teachers who embrace a variety of learning activities that appeal to multiple learning modalities are more likely to achieve early success for all pupils and song lyrics activities can help accomplish that goal.
6. Using interesting and attractive song lyrics activities that suit the pupils' level.

## **5. Conclusion**

The current study was designed to develop EFL listening comprehension skills of first year preparatory stage pupils by using song lyrics activities based teacher's guide. The researcher designed listening comprehension tests, administered before the experimentation, whose results revealed weakness in the pupils' listening comprehension skills. Song lyrics activities were designed and taught by the researcher for the experimental group while the control group was taught using regular instruction. Administering the listening comprehension test after the experimentation revealed a noticed development in the experimental group's listening comprehension skills. It was concluded that the song lyrics activities were effective in developing the EFL listening comprehension skills of the first-year preparatory stage pupils. Based on these results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The song lyrics activities were effective in developing the listening comprehension skills of first year preparatory stage pupils.
2. The present study made an observable change in the performance of the pupils in the experimental group.

3. The song lyrics activities proved to be helpful in developing the pupils' listening comprehension skills and promoting their ability to communicate in the target language.
4. The song lyrics activities motivated the pupils to participate more during the learning-teaching process.
5. The listening comprehension skills of foreign language learners can be developed from the early stages of learning. Furthermore, foreign language teachers should not neglect these important skills.

### 6. Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the results of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1- The proposed treatment in the present study can be adopted for teaching listening comprehension skills at other learning stages taking into consideration the learners' age, needs and levels.
- 2- More time and effort should be devoted to develop listening comprehension skills. More listening activities in school textbooks should be designed in an interactive environment.
- 3- Positive feedback throughout the listening processes is recommended.
- 4- Enriching the Egyptian curriculum with various song lyrics based-materials which tackle the different skills of English language.

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