

Lebanese University
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The Dean

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of
Arts Degree in Linguistics

**Using English Songs to Improve Young Learners`
Listening Comprehension**

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Beirut

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their endless love, support and encouragement. It is also dedicated to my lovely sister and her sons who gave me the strength to reach for the stars and chase my dreams.

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Abstract

The major aim of this research is to determine the effectiveness of using songs in improving the listening comprehension skills of young learners in primary cycles. This research will specifically investigate to what extent songs can contribute to the development of young learners' listening comprehension abilities.

The research will be carried out through the use of structured interview with English language teachers, pre-tests and post-tests and a questionnaire that reflect young learners' attitude towards using songs. The data will be analyzed using Word Office 2010 to determine the best statistical technique to be used to test the hypotheses and to interpret the results. The research shows that sufficient time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of foreign languages at Lebanese public schools and that students are unable to reach the targets about listening comprehension mentioned in the curriculum.

It is concluded in this study that the development of listening skills should be given priority in the Lebanese curriculum context and that the use of songs as listening materials should be promoted. This is a preliminary survey research and it is hoped that it will give an opportunity to teachers to realize that songs help improve young learners' listening comprehension skills. From the survey, it has been discovered that the use of songs not only helps the students' understanding, but also stimulates and increases their interest in learning, enjoying and engaging in the learning process. Future researchers should extend this research to other samples in other localities.

Key Words: Foreign language, young learners, listening comprehension and songs.

Chapter I

A- Introduction

Listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. Of the four major areas of communication skills and language development – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – the one that is the most basic is listening. It is evident that children listen and respond to language before they learn to talk. When it is time for children to learn to read, they still have to listen so that they can gain knowledge and information and follow directions. In the classroom, students have to listen carefully and attentively to lectures and class discussions in order to understand and retain the information they have received.

The first language mode that children acquire is listening. It provides a foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it plays a life-long role in the processes of learning and communication essential to productive participation in life. A study by Wilt (1950) found that people listen 45 percent of the time they spend communicating (as cited by Martin, 1987). Wilt reported that 30 percent of communication time was spent speaking, 16 percent reading, and 9 percent writing. That finding confirmed what Rankin had found in 1928 that people spent 70 percent of their time communicating, and three-fourths of this time was spent listening and speaking.

In first and second language acquisition, listening is the initial stage. According to Sharpe (2001), the promotion of children's speaking and listening skills lies at the heart of effective learning in all subjects of the primary curriculum. Therefore, ESL/EFL teachers have to make the development of children's listening skills a key aim of primary teaching and equip children with the most effective strategies for effective listening.

Thus, one might assume that the development of listening skills would get considerable attention in schools; but that does not appear to be the case. Burley-Allen (1995) found that more than forty percent of our daily communication time is spent on listening, thirty-five on speaking, sixteen percent on reading, and only nine percent on writing. Miller (2003) pointed out that listening has been relegated to a secondary position in the English language-teaching classroom.

As stated above, listening ability is one of the most important skills in foreign language learning. In spite of its importance, listening has long been the neglected skill in foreign language acquisition, research, teaching and assessment. There has been little research on the listening problems that foreign language learners experience in learning to listen to spoken English in the classrooms. Understanding students' learning difficulties may enable EFL teachers to help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately improve their English listening abilities.

However, as Demirel (2004) claimed, of all the four language skills, listening skill is the most difficult one to develop. Therefore, special attention and more time should be devoted to the teaching of such a basic skill. Even though this is the case, sufficient time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of young learners (YLS) in the public and private schools in Lebanon. In the evaluation of student success, the emphasis is primarily placed on the grammar and reading comprehension skills, and mostly there is no room for evaluating listening comprehension.

As a matter of fact, English language teaching (ELT) in Lebanese public schools has for quite a long time followed the traditional path of teaching vocabulary and using grammar textbooks, cramming students with a considerable amount of exercises and then evaluating their

accomplishments through consecutive exams. If we cast a close look at the Lebanese public schools that teach English as a foreign language for young learners, we will notice that the teaching curricula do not treat the listening skill as a priority in teaching. This may actually be one of the reasons why sufficient time is not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of young learners in Lebanon.

Some teachers reported that one of the reasons for this failure was the unavailability of audio-lingual materials. It is no surprise that EFL learners view English language learning as insipid and an unconquerable obstacle. The use of the conventional method in teaching English language such as explaining and drilling is unattractive and can be very dull to the students. Hence, this will inevitably affect and demotivate them to learn the language. To meet the demands of a challenging world in an era of globalization, authentic materials such as songs should be used in teaching English as a foreign language.

Consequently, one way to achieve mastery in English and improve the listening comprehension skills of young learners is to use songs. Song is a form of language that uses tones and rhythm as it is also the media of universal language. Language and music are known to have similar communicative modes, being aurally and orally transmitted, containing phonetic, syntactic and semantic components and developing early in life as social interactive media.

Songs have been an amusing companion for human beings since the dawn of history. As an integral part of our language experience, songs can be of great value to foreign language teaching. Moreover, the many-faceted merits songs possess may enrich and activate our foreign language class. Georgi Lozanov incorporates music into his teaching method—Suggestopedia, for music is instrumental in creating a relaxing and comfortable environment, which can propel language learning (as cited by Larsen-Freeman, 1985).

Most children enjoy singing songs, which can often be a welcome change from the routine of learning a foreign language. For the teacher, using songs in the classroom can also be a nice break from following a set curriculum. Songs can be taught to any number of students and even those teachers with the most limited resources can use them effectively. Songs can also play an important role in the development of language in young children learning a second language.

Besides music, an indispensable element of songs, namely lyrics, serve as a direct genuine source of teaching materials in foreign language classes, so why should songs be overlooked by teachers? There has been abundant research abroad on the use of songs as an authentic teaching resource in language teaching (Eken, 1996; Maley, 1997; Geoff, 2003), but a paucity of such studies is reported in Lebanon.

According to Peacock (1997), many writers share the same opinion that learners are motivated and stimulated in a foreign language classroom when authentic materials are used. He further concludes that authentic materials such as songs increase students' level of non-task behavior. Students display a high level of involvement in and concentration on authentic materials more than on artificial materials. Orlava (2003) stated that there is a great connection between students' motivation and authentic materials. It is a very good way to expose the target language to the learners as well as to facilitate their learning.

One advantage of using songs in the young learners' classroom is their flexibility. Songs can be used for a number of purposes and there are many reasons why songs can be considered a valuable pedagogical tool. Songs can help young learners improve their listening skills and pronunciation, thus potentially helping them to improve their speaking skills (Murphey, 1992). Songs can also be useful tools in the learning of vocabulary, sentence structures, and sentence patterns, not to mention their reflectivity of mother tongue culture (Murphey, 1992). Perhaps the

greatest benefit of using songs in the classroom is that they can produce a funny atmosphere. Pleasure for its own sake is an important part of learning a language; something which is often overlooked by teachers for songs can drive away boredom and improve student motivation (Millington, 2011).

Purcell (1992) stated that students can become bored by repeatedly listening to a narration or dialogue as they attempt to understand the meaning of new words or phrases in context. In contrast, listening to a song over and over again can seem less monotonous because of the rhythm and melody. Some songs, such as *Hello*, contain common expressions and can be used as good listening activities. For example, the teacher may sing the first three lines of the song below, and students can respond with the next three lines.

Hello,
Hello,
Hello, how are you?
I'm fine,
I'm fine,
I hope that you are, too.

Songs can also help to improve listening skills because they enable student's to practice listening to different forms of intonation and rhythm. English has a stress-timed rhythm, for which songs can help to establish a feeling. Murphey believes that music has the power to engrave itself into our brains, stating that "songs work on our short- and long-term memory" and are, therefore, adequate tools for using in the language classroom (1992, p. 3).

It is, therefore, important for ESL programs to prepare students for successful listening tasks by implementing authentic listening materials such as songs in English language classes. The rationale is to help young learners in the first and the second cycles (grades 3 and 5) develop their listening comprehension. Any syllabus designed for teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) to young learners typically contains songs, chants, and rhymes (Bourke,

2006). Songs are ubiquitous, yet their function and origin remain largely unknown. The myth of Orpheus, whose songs could charm wild beasts and coax even rocks and trees into movement, illustrates the power of songs. The emotional appeal of songs is the most widely accepted explanation of its function.

For the last two decades, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) methodology has been actively considering the possibility of using songs in class. It has proved that songs are effective instruments to inspire students in English learning. Furthermore, by using English songs in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5), language can be acquired in a relaxing and interesting atmosphere, and thus enhance students' listening comprehension. Therefore, this research is an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of using songs to enhance students' motivation in learning English at a primary school level. In addition, it is also used to examine whether songs can create positive attitudes among students during a language session.

To conclude, all schools should be provided with audio-lingual materials for teaching of English in primary schools, and books about games and songs should be written for teaching English to YLs. This paper endeavors to demonstrate the value of English songs in ELT and especially in improving the listening comprehension skills of young learners. It meanwhile reports several specific teaching activities as serious attempts to enhance young learners' listening comprehension skills.

Thus, the theoretical rationale of this article mostly derives from the definition of listening comprehension while the practical rationale derives from the current problematic situation in Lebanon that concerns the teaching of the listening skill. What follows is a discussion about how English songs improve the listening comprehension of young learners.

B- Statement of the Problem

Listening skills are highly important to teach to students, as listening itself is very important in life. Those who do not know how to listen are unable to listen to their friends and family, understand what they are saying or take directions when given. Listening is important in social situations, but it can also be crucial in a situation such as emergency where people must hear and comprehend what is going on around them in order to survive. Although listening skills are vital for these reasons, not all children have them and all students must be taught how to refine the skills they have. There are several difficulties in teaching listening skills, difficulties that all teachers have to overcome at some point.

In daily lives, listening plays a vital role. People listen for different purposes: informative, entertaining and didactic. As for foreign language learning, listening is of paramount importance since it provides the language input (Rost, 1994). Without understanding such input appropriately, learning simply cannot lead to any improvement. In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved (Cross, 1998), and language learners especially those who learn English as a foreign language in a non-native setting, find it difficult to acquire good listening skills.

The most important communication skill, namely listening, is often the least developed. Listening is rarely taught because educators assume that listening is synonymous with breathing. However, effective listening is a skill which, like any other skill, is achieved through study and practice. No matter how careful one person or group is in communicating their thoughts and ideas in a clear and friendly way, if the listener is not willing to receive the information, communication will fail. Poor listening makes good communication almost impossible.

School teaches students to read, write, do math, and handle dozens of other topics; however, schools typically do not have a course in listening although listening is an important and crucial skill. The first step to become a better listener is a personal commitment to being a better listener. A person must decide how to become a better listener, and subsequently work at it (Friedman, 2004). Unless someone listens, no communication skill will exist. Good listening begins with a positive attitude — open, cheerful, and accepting. Then, a person should put himself or herself in the process by "thinking" communication (Ward, 1990).

It is widely acknowledged that listening is a neglected skill due to the insufficient training of teachers (Mendelsohn, 1998 & Takahashi, 1999). Unlike other language skills, such as writing, reading and speaking, listening competency receives significantly little attention in the public school classroom in Lebanon. In addition, listening is probably the most important skill that people need to develop in order to acquire a second language since it is the principal means by which learners receive linguistic input. However, it has been found that this skill presents the highest level of difficulty in teaching English as a foreign language to cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5).

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether young learners' listening ability would be improved by using songs. There are many factors that affect foreign language listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two. The use of conventional methods in teaching English language such as explaining and drilling is unattractive and can be very dull to students. Hence, this will inevitably affect and obstruct their willingness to learn the language. Consequently, authentic materials such as "songs" motivate and stimulate young learners in the foreign language classroom more than artificial non-authentic materials do.

To implement strategies to develop listening comprehension inside the classroom, through the use of songs, and facilitate the second language acquisition in young learners of 5th grade of elementary schools, (Dunkel, 1991) and (Rost, 2002) suggested that listening comprehension is at the core of

learning a foreign language since it has an impact on the development of the other skills (as cited by Vandergrift, 2007). According to Morely (1984), listening is the most frequently employed skill in daily language use (as cited by Horne 2010). This is in agreement with Krashen's (1985) assertion that the development of basic language skills begins with listening.

Unfortunately, many Lebanese teachers fail to provide their students with sufficient listening practice. Reasons for this may be:

- Their own pronunciation is bad.
- They are unaware of any effective techniques for teaching listening.
- Students, especially young learners, are convinced that learning English is difficult, so they feel unmotivated.

This study takes into account the importance of teaching a second language in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5). Using English songs may represent an effective and highly motivated way to develop the listening skills of young learners. Songs stimulate students' interests and enhance their involvement. They are invaluable tools to develop students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and can, therefore, be used to teach a variety of language items such as sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, adjectives and adverbs. Learning English through songs also provides a non-threatening atmosphere for students, who usually are tense when speaking English in a formal classroom setting.

C-Hypotheses

The present study investigated the following hypotheses:

1. There are many factors that influence the improvement of young learners' listening comprehension in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5).

2. English songs stimulate and increase the interest of young learners, in cycles one and two, (grades 3 and 5) to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process.
3. Young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5) who listen to English songs will achieve higher grades than others who do not.

D- Research Questions

The present study attempted to answer these questions:

Question 1: What are the factors that hinder the improvement of young learners` listening comprehension in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5)?

Question 2: What is the attitude of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5) towards using English songs to improve their listening comprehension abilities?

Question 3: How would listening to English songs improve listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5)?

E- Significance of the Study

The major aim of this research is to determine the effectiveness of using songs in teaching English language to young learners. This research specifically investigated to what extent songs could contribute to the development of students` language proficiency.

This study tries to demonstrate why songs could be considered valuable pedagogical skill tools. It discusses how songs can improve the listening comprehension skills of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5). It is, therefore, concerned, in the first instance, with highlighting the factors that affect foreign language listening comprehension. It supplies a survey of the most common listening strategies required for improving listening skill. Also, it is designed to find out whether using songs can be an effective way in creating a positive attitude and motivation in language learners.

This study is intended to raise teachers` awareness of these problematic areas in listening comprehension so that appropriate measures can be taken. It is hoped that findings from this research will provide insights into how to improve students` listening comprehension skills. It offers useful recommendations and solutions to the problem of listening comprehension faced by students and teachers, not only in public but also in private schools in Lebanon, and additionally for worldwide students who are learning English as a foreign language. Besides, it will be a useful feedback for constructing new strategies / techniques to improve listening comprehension skills of young learners.

F- Limitations of the Study

This study has its limitations in that the findings cannot be generalized unless bigger samples are tested. The findings are only valid with respect to the specific sample included in this study. In other words, the results of this study are tentative and limited to the context of improving the listening comprehension skill of young learners who are studying English as a foreign language in Lebanese public schools. However, it is hoped that the accumulation of findings will not only shed light on specific aspects of improving the listening comprehension skills of young learners by using songs in Lebanese public schools, but will also be helpful to develop well-grounded approaches to teaching/learning English as a foreign language in private schools.

G- Definitions of Key Terms

It is necessary to define the key terms that are frequently used in this research. The terms are:

1. English as a foreign language (EFL): the role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but not used as a medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication in those countries (e.g., in government, or business).

2. English as a second language (ESL): the role of English for immigrant and other minority groups in English-speaking countries. These people may use their mother tongue at home or among friends, but they use English at school and work.
3. Learning strategy: intentional behavior and thought that learners use during learning in order to help them understand, learn, or remember new information.
4. Listening: a process in which a listener perceives aural stimuli and attempts to interpret the message of a speaker or on oral text.
5. Listening comprehension: the ability to extract information from auditorially presented language material.
6. Primary cycle of education: A period that lasts for six years. It starts at the age of 6 and expands till the age of 12. This cycle is divided into two modules of three years each. The first module comprises the first, second, and third grades, while the second module comprises the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.
7. Songs: forms of poetry put to music. The rhythmical, repeated, and rhyming patterns in songs are among the oldest forms of teaching language and cultural content to children.
8. Total Physical Response (TPR): a language teaching method developed by Asher. Orders, commands, and instructions that are presented require a physical response from the learner.
9. Young learners: are students in the primary cycle aged six to twelve.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The literature relevant to this study is presented in three parts. This literature shows the importance of listening comprehension in acquiring a foreign language. The first part defines listening comprehension, shows its importance and identifies the factors that make it difficult for young learners. The second part states the influence of learning strategies on English listening comprehension. The focus here will be on approaches found to be the most enlightening and helpful to language teachers. The last part demonstrates the effectiveness of songs as a way to relieve these difficulties as well as to enhance the development of listening comprehension for young learners in cycles one and two.

A-Definition of Listening Comprehension

Listening is an important skill for students of second language (L2) skill to master as part of their learning to effectively communicate in that language (Rost, 2002). Studies indicated that listening comprehension consisted of several procedures. First, listeners had to distinguish the sound, stress, intonation and pitch of the language. After they were aware of the entire information that the speakers said, listeners had to hold the information in their memory until it could be understood. Then, they had to unscramble the information from what they heard, and that was the output or the utilization process (Brown, 1995 & Chastain, 1975). Clark and Clark (1977) concluded that there were three parts in the process of listening comprehension: the perceptual, parsing, and utilization. For the perceptual, listeners received the sounds by a speaker and formed an image in their short-term memory, and learners transferred the information in echoic memory to short-term memory to process the sounds for meaning. The parsing process reorganized the

messages into a meaningful word that could be stored in short-term memory. Listeners utilized long-term memory to link the incoming message to their original knowledge. When the new information could link with existing knowledge, comprehension occurred.

Listening comprehension means the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. It is the perception of information and stimuli received through the ears (Richards, 1992). For foreign language learners, it may easily cause confusion and misunderstanding if they cannot comprehend what people intend to express. Lund (1990) categorized comprehension into main-idea comprehension, detail- comprehension and full comprehension. Main idea comprehension involves actual comprehension of the messages and depends primarily on recognition of vocabulary. Detail-comprehension involves getting specific information; it may be performed independently of main- idea comprehension when listeners know in advance what information they are listening for. Full comprehension, which is the goal of listening instruction, involves understanding the whole message – the main ideas and the details.

Comprehension does not always require understanding every word or structure (Ciccone, 1995). However, language learners usually assume that successful comprehension only occurs with total comprehension (Faerch & Kasper; 1986). This belief causes some language learners to become frightened when they fail to understand every single word they hear. According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992) students` anxiety about not understanding everything can lead them to “discouragement, fatigue, and a general sense of failure” (p.149). Indeed, teachers should help young learners understand that it is not necessary to recognize and understand every word in order to function well in listening comprehension.

Philips (1993) stated that listening tasks are extremely important in the primary school setting, providing a rich source of language data from which young learners begin to build up their own ideas of how the foreign language works. This knowledge is a rich source that grade five students draw on to produce language. Both instructors and students acknowledge the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings, (Ferris & Tagg, 1996; Ferris, 1998). Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skills were more important than reading skills as a factor contributing to academic development (Coakley & Wolvin; 1997).

Unfortunately, the importance of listening in a classroom instruction has been less emphasized than reading and writing. Nevertheless, it is evident that listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. It is even more important for the lives of young learners since listening is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education.

B- Importance of Listening Comprehension

For a second language learner, the importance of listening comprehension can never be overemphasized. In fact, listening comprehension (LC) precedes production in all cases of language learning, and it stands to reason that there can be no production unless linguistic input is provided and becomes comprehensible intake for the learner. Thus listening is a fundamental language skill, and as such it merits a critical priority among the four skill areas for language students. As Hansan (2000) pointed out, “listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills” (p.138).

There is cumulating evidence in second language acquisition research of the crucial role that input plays in learners’ linguistic development, especially in its early stages. In the case of first language acquisition, children typically go through a period of listening to people talk before they produce their first words. This “silent period” is necessary because the child needs to discover

what language is and what it does. Although the silent period is not obligatory in the case of second language acquisition as the learner already has some concept of language, it still characterizes the linguistic behavior of many beginners (Ellis, 1994). Comprehension is important not only because it precedes production chronologically, but primarily because, “it appears to be the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized” (Winitz, 1981 as cited in Byrnes, 1984, p.319).

Therefore, listening is an important part of foreign language learning process. It has been defined as an active process during which listeners construct meaning from oral input (Bacon, 1992). The listening skill is developed faster than the other three skills and could affect reading and writing abilities in learning a new language (Vandergrift, 1997). So identifying the factors that affect L2 listening comprehension will help teachers anticipate how authentic materials such as songs will stimulate and motivate young learners and will eventually lead to improving their listening comprehension.

C. Factors That Affect Listening Comprehension

In the area of ESL study, recognition of the highly demanding nature of listening activities has incited a number of researchers to probe the specific factors that affect L2comprehension. In a survey of 70 Chinese teachers and 60 students, Boyle (1984)indicated the factors perceived to be most salient influences on EFL listening comprehension in terms of (a) listener factors (e.g. intelligence, memory, motivation and background information); (b) speaker factors, such as language ability of the speaker, quality of the speaker's production, speed of delivery and prestige and personality of the speaker; and (c) factors in the material and medium (e.g. language used to convey the message, difficulty of content and concepts, and amount of support provided by gestures, visuals, etc.).

Samuels (1984) identified a number of factors "inside and outside the head" that influence listening: intelligence, language facility, background knowledge, metacognitive strategies, kinetics, motivation, topic, speaker awareness, clarity, and context. Dunkel (1991), in studying the factors influencing the success or failure of native and second language listening comprehension also summarized the elements both "inside the head" and "outside the head" that affect native learners (NL) comprehension in positive and negative ways, such as personal internal distractions, personal disinterest in the topic of the message, inattentiveness, emotional responses toward the speaker, the rate at which material is presented, and the conceptual difficulty and organization of the information presented. He concluded that all of the internal and external barriers for NL comprehension serve also to confound comprehension of L2 message.

Since listening comprehension is a covert activity that goes on inside the brain of the language learner, researchers have become interested in discovering the mental processes learners use while listening and looked into what learners actually do as aural input is processed. O'Malley et al.'s (1989) study, using think-aloud procedures, categorized the mental processes of listeners into three theory-based cognitive phases of perception, parsing and utilization. According to Anderson (1985), the cognitive framework of language comprehension, as it applies to listening, consists of (1) perceptual processing, which involves encoding the acoustic message by segmenting phonemes from the stream of speech and retaining the sounds in echoic memory; (2) parsing, during which words and messages are used to construct meaningful mental representations; and (3) utilization, which means relating the mental representation of the text meaning to existing knowledge (as cited in O'Malley et al., 1989).

In a similar study, Goh (2000) also offered a cognitive perspective on the comprehension problems of L2 listeners through the procedures of learners' self-reports: diaries, interviews, and

introspective verbalizations. Her analysis yielded 10 problems that emerged during the same three-phase cognitive processes discussed in O'Malley et al.'s article. In an earlier report of the same study, Goh (1997) investigated learners' metacognitive awareness of person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategy knowledge in the listening experience. In still another report of the diary study, Goh (1999) examined the perceptions of the factors that influence listening comprehension among the same group of subjects. Of the twenty factors categorized under five characteristics—text, listener, speaker, task, and environment—five were reported by more than two-thirds of the participants: vocabulary, prior knowledge, speech rate, type of input, and speaker's accent.

In a more recent survey research, Hansan (2000) provided empirical evidence to the kinds of listening problems encountered by EFL learners and showed how the problems were perceived by learners themselves: problems pertinent to the message they listened to, the speaker, and the listener. The research of the survey looked, in particular, at learner strategies, features of the listening text, characteristics of the speaker, attitudes of the listener, the task to be completed as a result of understanding the text, and the degree of visual or written support for the aural input.

The results of the above studies show that EFL learners are quite aware of the factors that hinder or assist their listening comprehension. Therefore, various techniques should be used to help learners utilize effective strategies to confront their problems.

D-Influence of Learning Strategies upon English Listening

Comprehension

For learners, one of the methods whereby learners can become actively involved in controlling their own learning is by using strategies. Vandergrift (1999) showed “Strategy development is important for listening training because strategies are conscious means by which learners can guide and evaluate their own comprehension and responses.” Among all the strategies for listening,

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) claimed three main types of self-regulated learning. They included the attempt to plan, check, monitor, select, revise, and evaluate, etc. For example, for metacognitive planning strategies, learners would clarify the objectives of an anticipated listening task and pay attention to specific aspects of language input or situational details that assisted in understanding the task (Vandergrift, 1999). Generally, the task can be discussed through three types: pre-listening planning strategies, "while-listening" monitoring strategies, and post-listening evaluation strategies.

The cognitive strategies are related to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval. They are investigated from the aspects of bottom-up strategies and top-down strategies. For bottom-up processing, they refer to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Comprehension begins with the received data that is analyzed as successive levels of organization --sounds, words, as a process of decoding. For bottom up strategies, Henner-Stanchina (1987) engaged in a similar study and pointed out that effective listeners were good at using their previous knowledge and experience to raise hypotheses about a text, integrating new information into their ongoing interpretations, making influences to bridge gaps, assessing their interpretations, and modifying their hypotheses, if necessary.

On the other hand, top-down processing went from meaning to language (Richards, 2008). Learners can try to predict what will be uttered by the signal. However, Chiu (2006) claimed that listening comprehension was neither only top-down nor bottom-up processing. Simultaneously, Lu (2008) summed up that the scholars believed the listeners not only utilized bottom-up but also top-down processing models. In sum, Thompson and Rubin (1996) indicated the effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategy instruction on the listening comprehension performance of American students learning Russian. They found that the subjects who received strategy

instruction in listening to video-recorded texts improved significantly over those who had received no instruction. These studies reveal that learners learn best when they combine cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and that strategy instruction does make a difference.

For social / affective strategies, Vandergrift (2003) defined the strategies as the techniques listeners used to collaborate with others, to verify understanding or to lower anxiety. Habte - Gabr (2006) stated that socio-affective strategies were those which were non-academic in nature and involved stimulating learning through establishing a level of empathy between the instructor and student. They included considering factors such as emotions and attitudes (Oxford, 1990). It was essential for listeners to know how to reduce the anxiety, feel confident in doing listening tasks, and promote personal motivation in improving listening competence (Vandergrift, 1997). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), among the four strategies of management strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, affective strategies in listening comprehension, both social and affective strategies influenced the learning situation immediately. Consequently, to facilitate listening comprehension, certain strategies should be used to help young learners comprehend, learn or retain information.

E- Listening Skills and Young Learners

Listening is the receptive use of language, and since the goal is to make sense of the speech, the focus is on meaning rather than language (Cameron, 2001). Sarıçoban (1999) stated that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. For learners, listening is how spoken language becomes input (i.e., it is the first stage of learning a new language). In the classroom, this happens by listening to the teacher, a CD, or other learners. It is the process of interpreting messages — what people say.

Two theories of speech perception portray listeners as having very different roles. In the first view, listeners play a passive role and simply recognize and decode sounds, and in the second view, listeners play an active role and perceive sounds by accessing internal articulation rules to decode speech (Crystal, 1997). Whether speech perception is active or passive, or a combination of both, Phillips (1993) said that listening tasks are extremely important in the primary school setting, providing a rich source of language data from which children begin to build up their own ideas of how the foreign language works. This knowledge is a rich source that YLs draw on to produce language.

Listening is the initial stage in first and second language acquisition. According to Sharpe (2001), the promotion of children's speaking and listening skills lies at the heart of effective learning in all subjects of the primary curriculum. Therefore, ESL/EFL teachers have to make the development of children's listening skills a key aim of primary teaching and equip them with the best strategies for effective listening.

Linse (2005) also considered the teaching of listening skills as foundational to the development of other language skills. We should, however, be aware that any kind of listening comprehension activity needs to be well guided with clear aims. To this end, Ur (1996) argued that a listening purpose should be provided in the definition of a pre-set task.

The definition of a purpose enables the listener to listen selectively for significant information. Providing the students with some idea of what they are going to hear and what they are asked to do with it helps them to succeed in the task; it also raises motivation and interest. The fact that learners are active during the listening, rather than waiting until the end to do something, keeps the learners busy and helps prevent boredom.

From young learners to adult learners, there are ways of including songs into lessons according to the linguistic ability and interests of students. Children are particularly receptive to sound and rhythm, with musical intelligence appearing early on their intellectual development (Davies, 2000). Therefore, it is very essential to show how songs can be implemented to enable teachers improve the listening comprehension of young learners.

F- Songs and Young Learners

The most prominent features of songs that reinforce language acquisition include their rhythmic and repetitive nature and the joy that the association between melody and content brings to the learning activity. Children have a keen awareness of rhythm, and they have not yet experienced the anxiety that can accompany learning a second language (Krashen, 1981). Therefore, there are many advantages of using songs in YL ESL/EFL classrooms, the most striking ones are the following.

1. Songs Are Keys to Primary Practice

Most primary school teachers generally use songs as a teaching technique, and Cameron, (2001) claimed that the use of songs and rhymes is also important for YLs in foreign language classrooms. Likewise, Johnstone (2002) claimed that teachers of YLs may make an important contribution to children's early language education by introducing their classes to recorded songs. Demirel (2004) made the strongest claim when he argued that the most effective way to teach listening comprehension, pronunciation, and dictation to YLs was through teaching songs.

2. Songs Create Safe and Natural Classroom Ethos

According to Cullen (1999), songs are significant teaching tools in teaching ESL/EFL because, as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in the language classroom and they often hold strong views about music. This affinity with music makes songs vital tools to create

a safe and natural classroom ethos and to overcome feelings of shyness and hesitation on the part of the learners.

Because of their limited attention span, YLs need a variety of activities. YLs are often shy, and they should join in classroom activities when they feel ready rather than when the teacher demands—an opportunity that songs create (Djigunovich&Vilke; 2000). The learning characteristics of YLs also reveal a need to develop a strong emotional attachment to their teacher. “Listen and Do” songs support this attachment since the students and the teacher are physically involved in doing the same actions; that is, they share a common experience.

The students’ education, including language education, is a process in which students should be encouraged to contribute physically, emotionally, and intellectually. This type of learning environment is best achieved when the teacher creates a safe, non-threatening context within which learners can play with language (Sevik, 2012).

3. Songs Provide Opportunities for Repetition and Practice

Songs provide excellent opportunities for repetition and practice that might otherwise be tedious. Repetition of language is pleasurable—such as repeating choruses, or singing *cumulative songs* where each verse borrows words from a previous verse (e.g., “The Twelve Days of Christmas”). This repetition, most often accompanied by physical actions, helps learning and in turn leads to familiarity so that children feel comfortable with the foreign language (Rumley, 1999). In addition, as argued by Sharpe (2001), by singing songs pupils gradually internalize the structures and patterns of the foreign language as well as the specific language items that the teacher wants them to learn.

4. Songs Provide Opportunities for Real Language Use

According to Sharpe (2001), songs provide an occasion for real language use in a fun and enjoyable situation. She claims that singing is a vital part of the life of a young child, inside and outside the school, and incorporating the foreign language into this fundamental activity is another way of normalizing it. Young children readily imitate sounds and often pleasurably associate singing and playing with rhythms and rhymes from an early age.

Schoepp (2001) believed that the three following patterns emerge from the research on why songs are valuable in the ESL/EFL classroom:

- a. Affective reasons: A positive attitude and environment enhance language learning. Songs are an enjoyable activity that contributes to a supportive, non-threatening setting with confident and active learners.
- b. Cognitive reasons: Songs contribute to fluency and the automatic use of meaningful language structures.
- c. Linguistic reasons: In addition to building fluency, songs provide exposure to a wide variety of the authentic language that students will eventually face in nonacademic settings.

G- How to Teach Songs

A word of caution is necessary. As language teachers, we should always bear in mind that our main responsibility is to teach the target language. No matter how fun and enjoyable song activities may be for YLs, we should not get carried away by the music and rhythm of songs. Our main responsibility is not to teach singing skills, but to teach the target language.

Therefore, if songs are used ineffectively, they can easily become mere entertainment and pleasurable interruptions in the school day and, in the long term, they result in boredom and lack of interest. There should be a clear reason in the language teacher's mind as to why and how to

use a song. Songs can be an effective means of developing young learners` language skills only when they are well integrated into a scheme of work and carefully selected for the cognitive and linguistic needs of pupils (Sevik, 2012).

Kirsch (2008) stated that listening activities should be based on meaningful, appropriate, and authentic texts (e.g., a story, song, or poem) that assist listening and remembering and that match the language and grade level of pupils. Ersöz (2007, p.20) suggested that teachers should be careful to choose songs that:

- contain simple and easily understood lyrics
- link with a topic or vocabulary that learners are studying in class
- contain repetitive lines
- allow children to easily do actions (to help emphasize meaning)

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how songs and appropriate follow-up activities can be used effectively as a pedagogical tool in Lebanese public schools to support the development of listening comprehension for young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5). Therefore, teachers should develop songs into language learning tasks.

Chapter III

Methodology

The aim of the research was to explore the effect of a one-semester program of listening to English songs on improving the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5) at ShouEIFat Amrousiyeh Official School. In order to achieve this aim, the development of the listening skill in four groups of elementary students of English was considered. Two categories of these groups were compared: two groups that received regular listening to English songs, on the one hand, and two others that followed the regular listening curriculum, on the other hand.

The research hypothesis was that all students' listening skills would improve during one semester of studies, but the improvement would be significantly greater in the case of students who listened to English songs than in the case of those who listened to the traditional listening curriculum. A mixed method design that combined qualitative and quantitative data was used in order to allow comprehensive analysis of the research questions. The design included three procedures: i) making pre-tests and post-tests; ii) administering a structured questionnaire and iii) conducting an open-ended semi-structured interview. This is to elicit feedback on language teaching and learning of listening skill via using English songs. The study was conducted during the first semester of the year 2013/2014 in two English sections in ShouEIFat Amrousiyeh Official School.

Therefore, this paper involves both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify the perceptions of instructors and young learners towards using English songs for improving listening

skill. To fulfill the desired purpose, an explanation of the subjects, the design, the variables, the instrumentation and the procedure of this study is herein included.

In order to have a strong experimental design, internal threats to validity were controlled by using pre-testing. To be confident that there were no significant differences among the subjects of the Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG) regarding the variables under investigation, both groups were pre-tested at the beginning of the experiment.

A- Subjects

The participants were young learners from cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5) who came from a public school, namely ShouEIFat Amrousiyeh Official School, located in ShouEIFat. Their ages ranged between 7 and 13. This study was performed on two sections of grade 3 and two sections of grade 5. The participants were selected and assigned into four different groups according to their results in the pre-tests. So young learners of different levels were chosen for each section. One hundred percent of the population was Arabs. They were mainly Lebanese with some Syrians who spoke Arabic as their mother tongue. The division of students is shown in the following table.

	Grade 3		Grade 5	
Gender	Control Group	Experimental Group	Control Group	Experimental Group
Boys	6	6	8	7
Girls	9	9	7	8
Total No. of Students	15	15	15	15

Table1: The division of students in grades 3 and 5.

This population was chosen for many reasons. First, the researcher did not receive admission to implement this study on students at a private school over a period of one semester. Therefore, the researcher got permission from the Ministry of Education to implement this experiment on students from public schools. Second, Shoueifat Amrousiyeh Official School was chosen because of its vicinity to the researcher`s work, so that no time would be wasted.

B- Research Design

The research conducted was a classroom action research that aimed to increase the quality of teaching practices. According to Burns (1999), the major focus of action research should be on practical issues of immediate concern to particular social groups or communities. The research was conducted in naturally occurring settings, primarily using methods common to both qualitative and quantitative research. The research could also be defined as an action that was done to solve an identified problem in the classroom.

This study focused on a specific and particular educational technique, the effectiveness of songs in improving the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5). The study adopted the quasi-experimental approach which involved two groups of students, an experimental group and a control one. It gave a systematic collection of evidence on the worth of this technique. It tested the effectiveness of using English songs by means of comparison in classrooms. Two sections of grades 3 and 5 learners were considered as the control groups. These sections followed the regular listening curriculum, which meant listening to a dialogue, a short story or a small paragraph and then doing listening comprehension exercises that existed in their textbooks. The other sections were the experimental groups that listened to English songs and did various activities related to listening, grammar, pronunciation and writing to improve the participants` listening comprehension.

The results were collected and analyzed in terms of means and standard deviation. At the beginning, quantitative data were taken from students' scores in pre-tests and post-tests. This method was used for many reasons. In spite of arguments in favor of multiple measurements over time (Willett, 1997), the pretest-posttest design is still widely used to compare the changes exhibited by two or more groups in response to a treatment (Collins, 1996; Williams & Zimmerman, 1996; Bonate, 2000). This design has two advantages over just a posttest design. First, the pretest provides information about individual differences, which can be used to decrease estimates of error variance, thereby increasing power. The second advantage is that baseline pretest differences between groups can be taken into account.

Quantitative data were also taken from a close-ended, structured questionnaire focusing on young learners' motivation and engagement and reflecting their attitude towards listening to songs. The questionnaire is by far the most frequently used instrument in educational research, and its popularity is demonstrated by the number of published studies and students projects in education that employ this instrument for data collection (Nwogu, 2006). According to Fife-Schaw (2001), the questionnaire is probably the most common research tool that is relatively well understood and that has the advantages of simplicity, versatility and low cost. The questionnaire was made of two parts: the first consisted of demographic information including the student's grade, gender and age while the second part consisted of eight questions that reflected young learners' attitudes towards using songs. Answers were recorded on a 5-point Likert Scale. The scoring system ranged between "strongly agree" to be scored (1) point, "agree" (2) points, "undecided" (3) points, "disagree" (4) points and "strongly disagree" (5) points.

However, qualitative data were taken from an open-ended, semi-structured interview with teachers about factors that hinder young learners' listening comprehension at public schools. The

interview was conducted face to face with seven English language teachers. It consisted of eight questions related to the factors that hinder young learners` listening comprehension in cycles one and two. Because the research was applied to only four sections, any of the four could constitute the control group while the others could be experimental. The design of the study is shown in the following tables. It is worth noting that singers for grade 3 songs were not mentioned because these songs were sung by various artists.

Grade 3	Pre-tests	Treatment (8weeks)	Post-tests
Experimental group (No. =15)	Listening to the song(Wheels on the Bus)	The subjects received the treatment via 8 songs and practiced special exercises to improve their listening comprehension.	Listening to the song(Wheels on the Bus)
Control group (No. =15)	Listening to the song (Wheels on the Bus)	The subjects received the traditional listening curriculum.	Listening to the song (Wheels on the Bus)

Table 2: Design of study for grade three.

Grade 5	Pre-tests	Treatment (8weeks)	Post-tests
Experimental group (No. =15)	Listening to the song (Heal the World by Michael Jackson)	The subjects received the treatment via 8 songs and practiced special exercises to improve their listening comprehension.	Listening to the song (Heal the World by Michael Jackson)
Control group (No. =15)	Listening to the song (Heal the World by Michael Jackson)	The subjects received the traditional listening curriculum.	Listening to the song (Heal the World by Michael Jackson)

Table 3: Design of study for grade five.

Therefore, this present study has applied the traditional foreign language research principles of quantitative and qualitative design. These principles have some major advantages: they are precise; they produce reliable and replicable data as well as statistically significant results.

C- Variables

In this study, the independent variable was the use of English songs while the dependent variable was the listening comprehension which was measured by the difference in the mean scores between pre-tests and post-tests for both groups. For the purpose of improving young learners' listening comprehension in cycles one and two (grades 3 and 5), English songs were used. They were selected to fit in with the curriculum or language points to be taught. Familiar and internationally known songs were selected for grade 3 learners, whereas meaningful and popular songs which harbor cultural elements, as well as grammatical patterns, were chosen for grade 5 learners. All of the chosen songs were clear and comprehensible. They were used to motivate and stimulate students, to improve their listening comprehension skills and to provide them with an enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

D- Instrumentation

Three instruments were used to collect data in order to examine the effectiveness of using songs in improving the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two. (These instruments are available in Appendices). The research instruments were the following ones. The first instrument was an open-ended semi - structured interview with 7 English language teachers to investigate the factors that hinder young learners' listening comprehension skills in cycles one and two. The second instrument consisted of pre-tests and post-tests. The third instrument was a questionnaire about students' attitude towards the use of songs.

The assessment of the students' listening skills was carried out using pre-tests and post-tests. With respect to the contents of both (pre-tests and post-tests) in both cycles one and two, it is worth noting that they were not identical with regard to the skills they measured. That was for the purpose of diversification of activities. In grade 3, the pre-tests and post-tests covered activities such as listening, pronunciation and writing, while in grade 5 they covered only listening and grammar activities. The same songs were used in the pre-tests and post-tests for each class in both cycles (grades 3 and 5). The tests consisted of three parts (pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening). The first part prepared students to brainstorm ideas or vocabulary about the topic of the songs. The second part contained activities such as filling gap tasks and choosing correct answers that students had to practice after listening to the songs. The last part consisted of pronunciation, grammar and writing activities related to the song.

The score of the tests was over 5 in both grades, since English language was given the weight of 20 points in these classes. Thus, 5 marks were given for each skill (reading, speaking, listening and writing). The songs were selected for several reasons. First of all, they contained simple and easily understood lyrics. Second, they were linked with the topics and the vocabulary that students were studying in class. Third, they contained repetitive lines that increased students' interest to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process.

A diversity of songs was used during the training sessions for both cycles (grades 3 and 5). (Sample songs for both grades are shown in appendix D). So, eight songs with their activities were incorporated into a sample English language syllabus for grade 3 students, along with the target language skill of each topic or lesson (see appendix C). The same procedure was followed for grade 5. While carrying out the research, a laptop, two speakers and two compact discs were used.

To learn about young learners` attitude towards listening comprehension through English songs, a close-ended, structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself for a further study. It consisted of 10 items about whether English songs stimulate and increase the young learners` interest to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process. Some of the items were related to learning motivation while the others were related to learning performance. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement by checking one of five response categories on a 5-point Likert Scale.

Named after its developer, Rensis Likert, the Likert scale is one of the most widely used itemized scales. This measuring tool may encourage the participants to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with these items by responding to (1) strongly agree,(2) agree, (3) undecided , (4) disagree or (5) strongly disagree, rather than requiring a strongly positive or negative decision. However, in a comprehensive review of methodological process in motivation questionnaire, it has been determined that a 5-point likert scale is typically used for the quantitative measurement of motivation.

E- Procedures

At the beginning of this study, an open-ended, semi-structured interview was conducted with 7 English language teachers to determine the factors that hinder young learners` listening comprehension in public schools. Open-ended questions allow time and space for free-form responses which invite participants to share their understandings, experiences, opinions and interpretations, as well as their reactions to social processes and situations (McGuirk & O`Neill, 2005). The “structured interview” is a managed verbal exchange (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Gillman, 2000) and as such, its effectiveness heavily depends on the communication skills of the interviewer according to (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). Semi-structured interviews have been used

in the past studies (Friedman & Miller, 2007), and Kahn (1999) also provided guidelines for using semi-structured interviews to probe value issues. The semi-structured interview was used because it provided a very flexible technique for small groups. Because of this approach, the interviewee had flexibility and freedom in deciding what needed to be described / argued, how much explanation to offer, and how much detail to be used.

The interview was conducted face-to-face with seven English language teachers who taught cycles one and two. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information about the main reasons that stand behind the learners' listening difficulties in the primary cycle so that suitable measures will be taken to improve their performance. The interview was conducted in a meeting room at the school, during the regular program day. Seven English language teachers were asked open-ended questions designed to generate the most detailed response possible. Each interview was scheduled to last for 30 minutes. In the interview, a set of prepared questions acted as a guide for the researcher. The flow of the interview was meant to be primarily driven by the participants. The participants were asked to talk openly and freely about whatever they viewed as important and were thus encouraged to elaborate and even take the conversation in an unanticipated direction.

The interview consisted of seven open-ended questions. The first question focused on the most difficult language skill for young learners. The second question focused on the main causes that hindered them from not understanding the listening text. The third question concentrated on the challenges for teaching listening comprehension in cycles one and two in public schools. The fourth question spotted light on the availability and effectiveness of listening comprehension exercises in students' textbooks. The fifth question concentrated on the usage of aural authentic materials prepared by teachers. The sixth question focused on teachers' choice between authentic and non-authentic materials while teaching listening comprehension. The last question spotted

light on whether listening skill was emphasized in teaching English as a foreign language at Lebanese public school. (The completed open-ended, semi-structured interview is given in appendix A).

Note-taking technique was used. All the answers of the interviewees were analyzed by categorizing the points that came out from the statements for each question and tabulating the results. In addition, thematic analysis and grouping of the answers from different interviewees to the same or similar questions were employed for the analysis of the interview.

After recognizing the factors that hinder young learners' listening comprehension, the researcher examined the effectiveness of English songs in improving the learners' listening skill. Therefore, she conducted the present study during one semester that lasted from October to December. The independent variable used in this study consisted of two conditions: an experimental condition in which the students practiced listening to English songs and a control condition in which the students practiced listening according to the traditional methods. Both groups had the same number of hours of instruction, which was one period weekly for about fifty minutes. The dependent variable was the listening comprehension of both groups. The participants were selected and assigned into four different groups according to their English results in the pre-tests. So, young learners who got low scores in the pre-test exams were chosen for each section. The participants in the experimental group were taught by the same instructor while the students in the control groups were taught by their English language teachers. On the first day, the listening pre-tests were administered by the researcher to (grades 3 and 5) both control and experimental groups in each class.

In grade 3, the song "Wheels on The Bus" was used as a pre-test for 50 minutes. It was made up of three parts: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. In the first part, the teacher

introduced the vocabulary related to the song by using the picture of a bus and asking students some questions. Then, the song lyrics were handed out to the students. In the second part, the song was played three times out of a laptop computer with extra speakers attached. First, it was played without pauses, the second time with pauses and the third time without pauses. Meanwhile, students were asked to fill in the gaps with the missing words from the box. In the post-listening stage, students were asked to answer questions related to pronunciation and creative writing.

The song “Heal the World” by Michael Jackson was given as a pre-test for grade sections for 50 minutes. It was made up of three parts: Pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. In the first part, the students were shown various pictures of violence, war, orphans, and destruction, and were asked some questions about violation of human rights. Then, the song lyrics were handed out to the students. In the second part, the song was played three times out of a laptop computer with extra speakers attached. First, it was played without pauses, the second time with pauses and the third time without pauses. Meanwhile, students were asked to fill in the gaps with the missing words from the box, to put the lyric phrases in order and then to circle the correct words they heard. In the post-listening stage, students were asked to fill out a table with irregular verbs taken from the song by writing their simple past and past participles.

After the listening pre-tests were administered to each group in both cycles (grades 3 and 5) on the first day, the training sessions were held for one whole semester. Every week each section from the experimental groups was given one training session, while the subjects in the control groups listened once per week in accordance with the traditional listening curriculum with the help of their English language teacher. The schedule for teaching listening skill in both experimental and control classes by the instructor and other English language teachers was as follows.

Days of the Week	Experimental Group Grade 3	Experimental Group Grade 5	Control Group Grade 3	Control Group Grade 5
Monday			3rd hour	5 th hour
Wednesday	1 st hour	2 nd hour		

Table 4: Schedule for teaching listening skill.

The subjects in the experimental groups listened to songs with grammar and vocabulary related to the topics in their textbooks. Since the eight English songs were used as supplemental materials to their English textbooks, the instructional time was intermittent. That is, each song was introduced at the end of each lesson. On average, minutes per period were spent practicing various aspects of language skills such as listening, speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

In grade 3, popular English songs were used including Mary Had a Little Lamb, Old Macdonald Had a Farm; London Bridge; Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star; Row, Row Your Boat; Jingle Bells; Hush, Little Baby and Autumn Leaves. When the songs were introduced, young learners worked on listening skills and practiced exercises such gap-fill tasks and unscrambling sentences. Speaking English was practiced by singing songs as well and by doing exercises to improve the participants` pronunciation.

As mentioned earlier, songs provide excellent opportunities for repetition and practice that might otherwise be tedious. Repetition of language is pleasurable—such as repeating choruses, or singing *cumulative songs* where each verse borrows words from the previous one. This repetition, most often accompanied by physical actions, helps learning and, in turn, leads to familiarity so that children feel comfortable with the foreign language (Rumley, 1999). In addition, as it was argued by Sharpe (2001), by singing songs pupils gradually internalize the structures and patterns of the

foreign language as well as the specific language items that the teacher wants them to learn. To improve their writing skills, with special guidance from the instructor, students were asked to write short lyrics similar to those they listened to in the class.

Regarding grade 5, popular English songs were used including People Work, Imagine, Earth Song, My Dream Is to Fly, We Can Save Our Planet, Let the Sky Fall, Show Me the Meaning of Being Lonely and the Solar System Song. The variety of songs used reflected topics related to grade 5 curriculums such as human rights, environment, nature, science and technology. When the songs were introduced, young learners worked on listening skills and practiced exercises such as gap-filling tasks, ordering lyric phrases and choosing correct answers. They practiced speaking by discussing the topics and expressing their opinions and reflections about the contents of the songs. Moreover, they practiced special grammar exercises such as conditionals, phrasal verbs, irregular verbs and verb tenses. Also, they were given special exercises to use vocabulary learned in the songs in useful sentences related to the topics of the songs. The afore-mentioned specific procedures for each group were followed for eight consecutive sessions.

In their last session, the young learners in both cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5) were post-tested for fifty minutes to evaluate their progress in listening comprehension. The same tests and instructions were used in both stages (pre-tests & post-tests). Next, the experimental group learners in grades 3 and 5 were given a structured questionnaire two weeks after the end of the treatment. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out about young learners` attitude towards using songs in improving their listening comprehension. It took the respondents 20 minutes to complete it with the help and instructions of the researcher.

The questionnaire was self-developed and pilot tested prior to its use. During the instrument development phase, a pilot test was held for 25 students other than the sample group. The aim of

the test was to evaluate the content and format of the questionnaire. Respondents involved in the pilot test provided feedback on the ease and difficulty of completing the items and their understanding of the instructions. From the pilot test, the researcher got an idea about some of the items which appeared to be difficult. Results of the pilot test identified items that were unclear to respondents. This ambiguity resulted in a change of a number of difficult items from the questionnaire. The ambiguities of the test items, as well as those of the too easy or too difficult test items, were eliminated from final versions of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then reviewed by the researcher for the purpose of making it easily understood by young learners. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine students' interest and their reaction toward the approach used.

The questionnaire consisted of ten items. Some of them were related to learning motivation while others to learning performance. The questionnaire was also made up of; two parts. The first part consisted of demographic information including student's grade, gender and age. The second part consisted of 10 items about whether English songs stimulate and increase the young learners' interest to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process. Participants indicated the extent to which they felt each item was true for them on a 5-point Likert Scale by responding to (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) undecided, (4) disagree or (5) strongly disagree. In grade 3, the items related to learning motivation were 1, 3, 4, 5 and 10, while the items related to learning performance were 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Regarding grade 5, the items related to learning motivation were 1, 3, 4 and 5, whereas those related to learning performance were 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. (The completed questionnaire is given in appendix E).

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

This chapter reports the findings that were obtained from the examinations of the data collected in this study. Summary of the findings and detailed description of results are discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to show the effectiveness of using English songs in improving the listening comprehension skills of young learners in cycles one and two and to encourage the use of songs in the teaching of English language.

A- Statistical Procedures

First, in order to facilitate the analysis of the findings of the semi-structured interview with English language teachers, the teachers` responses were grouped into categories and the results transferred into figures. Second, the performance of all groups (control & experimental) in both grades 3 and 5 on the pre-tests and post-tests was tabulated and coded by using Microsoft Office 2010. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the results depending on the mean score and standard deviation obtained for each class. Finally, the results of the questionnaire about young learners` attitude towards using English songs to improve their listening comprehension were also tabulated and coded by using Microsoft Office 2010. The findings obtained have been used to achieve the purpose of the study.

B- Data Analysis

1. Interview with teachers

First, the results of the open-ended structured interview conducted with the seven English language teachers were as follows.

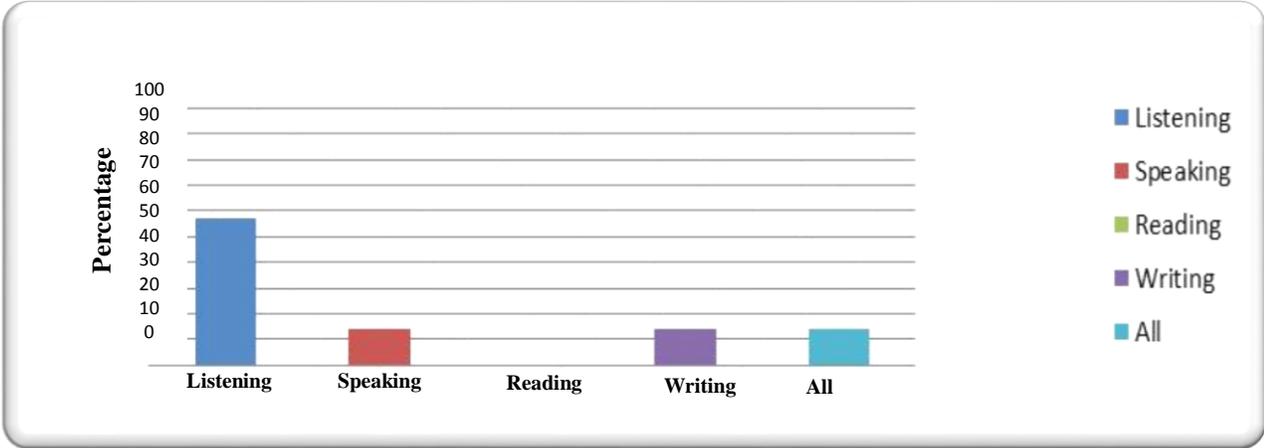


Figure 1: Most difficult skill for young learners.

Figure 1 shows that 58% of teachers considered that listening skill was the most difficult skill for young learners; 14 % reported that speaking could be very difficult for young students, 14% also considered writing as the most difficult skill whereas 14 % pointed out that all the four skills were hard for primary students.

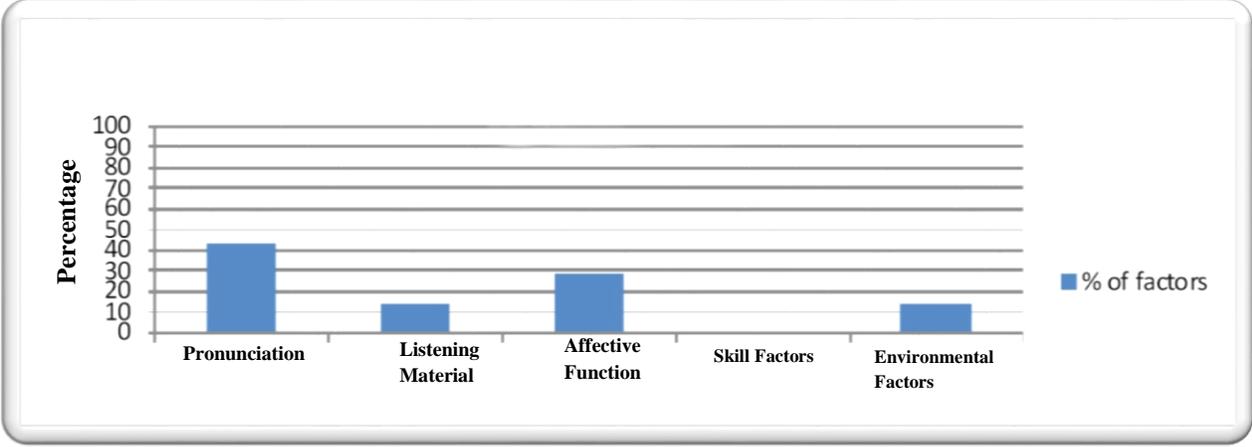


Figure 2: Factors that hinder young learners understanding of a listening task.

Figure 2 demonstrates that 43% of teachers considered that pronunciation influenced young learners` listening comprehension, 29% stated that affective factors could have their negative influence on primary students, 14 % reported that the difficulty of the listening material was one

of the main factors that inhibited listening comprehension while 14% believed that the environmental factors were the main ones that affected listening comprehension.

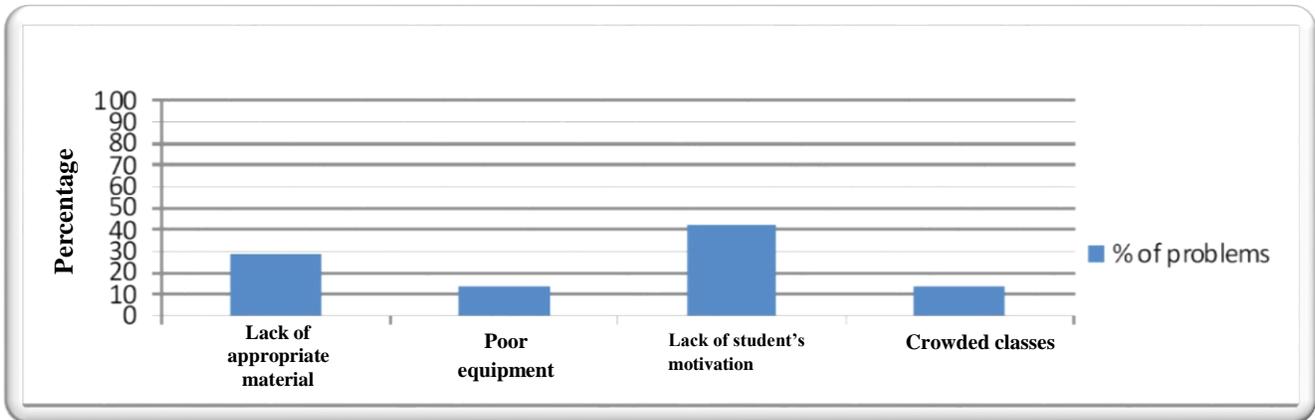


Figure 3: Problems faced by teachers at public schools.

Figure 3 illustrates that 44% of teachers claimed that lack of young learners' motivation could be the most materials was a main obstacle for them, 14% considered that poor equipment hindered their performance challenging factor they faced while teaching listening, 28% reported that lack of appropriate in teaching while 14% believed that the crowded classes caused hindrance in the teaching-learning progress.

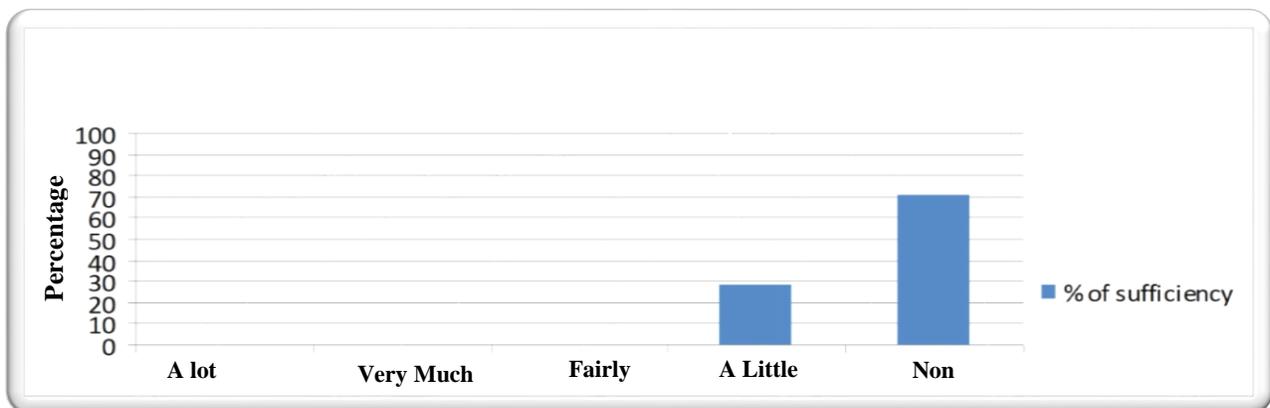


Figure 4: Sufficiency of listening comprehension exercises in textbooks.

Figure 4 shows that 72% of teachers considered that listening comprehension exercises in young learners' textbooks were totally insufficient while 28% claimed that those exercises had a little sufficiency.

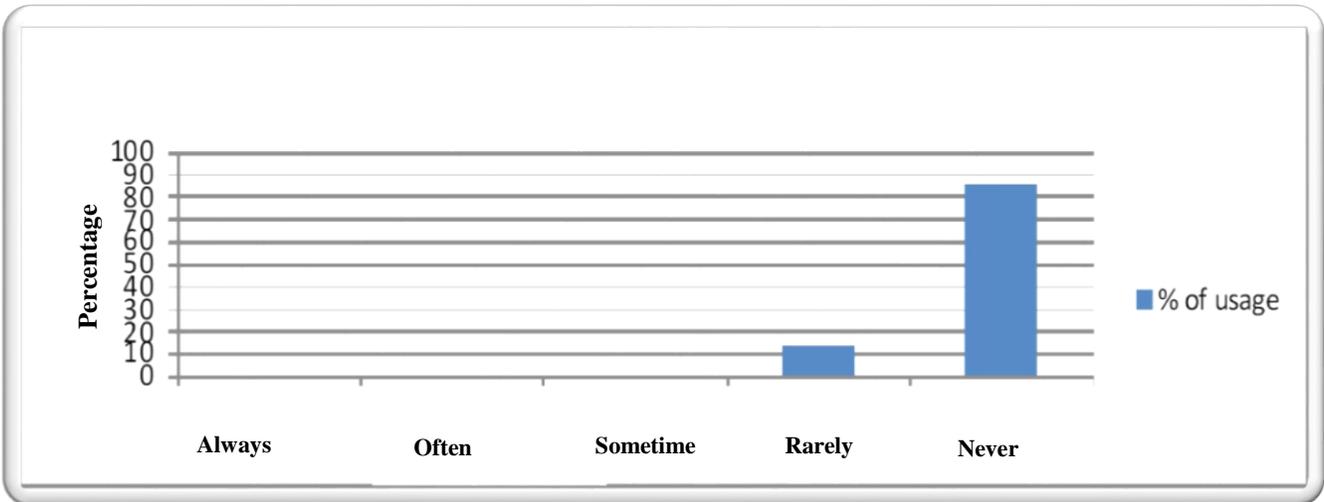


Figure 5: Usage of aural authentic materials by teachers.

Figure 5 demonstrates that 86% of teachers have never used any aural authentic material while teaching listening skill whereas 14% stated that they rarely used them in their classes.

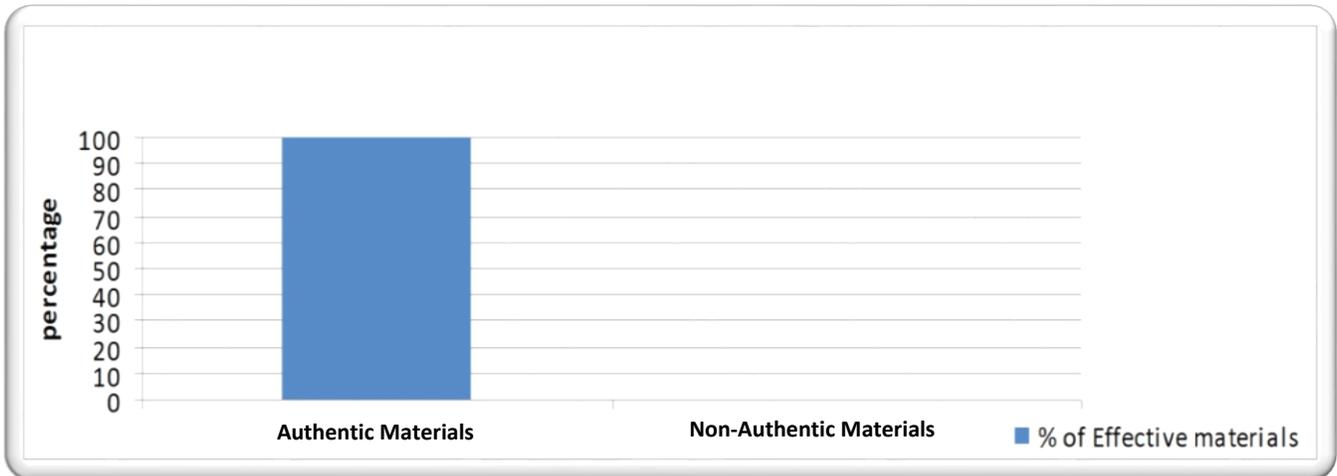


Figure 6: Effective materials in teaching listening comprehension.

Figure 6 shows that 100% of teachers agreed that authentic listening materials were highly effective in teaching listening skill.

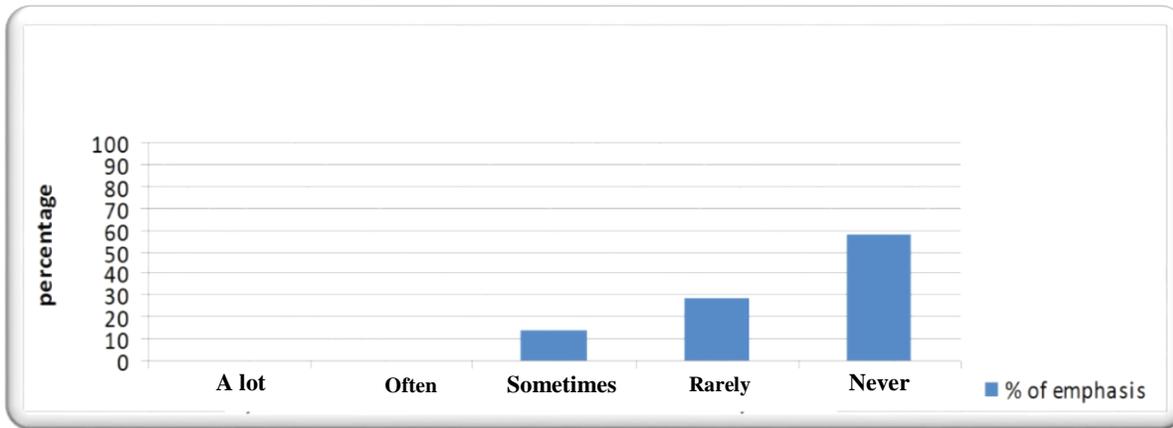


Figure 7: Emphasis on listening skill at public schools.

Figure 7 demonstrates that 58% of teachers believed that listening skill was not emphasized in teaching of English language at public schools, 28% stated that it was rarely emphasized, while only 14 % claimed that emphasis of the listening skill was sometimes observed.

2. Results of pre-tests and post-tests

Second, the results of the pre-test and post-tests in (grades 3&5) in both control and experimental groups were as follows.

a) Grade 3: Experimental group

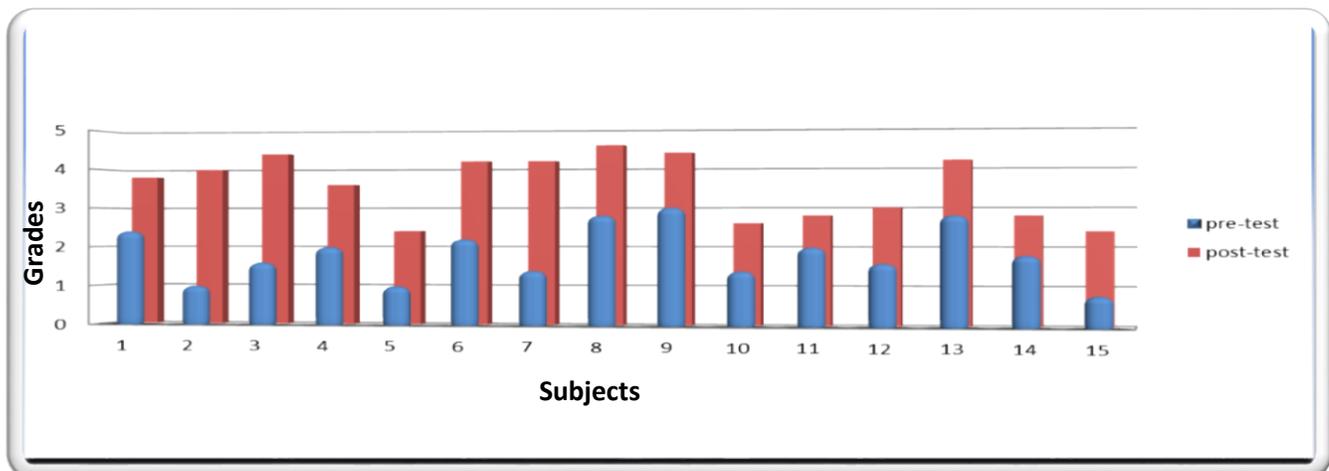


Figure 8: The differences between pre-test and post-test scores for experimental Group.

As demonstrated in figure 8, the young learners` scores in the post-test are higher than those in the pre-test. This shows a significant difference in the scores obtained by the experimental group on their post-test.

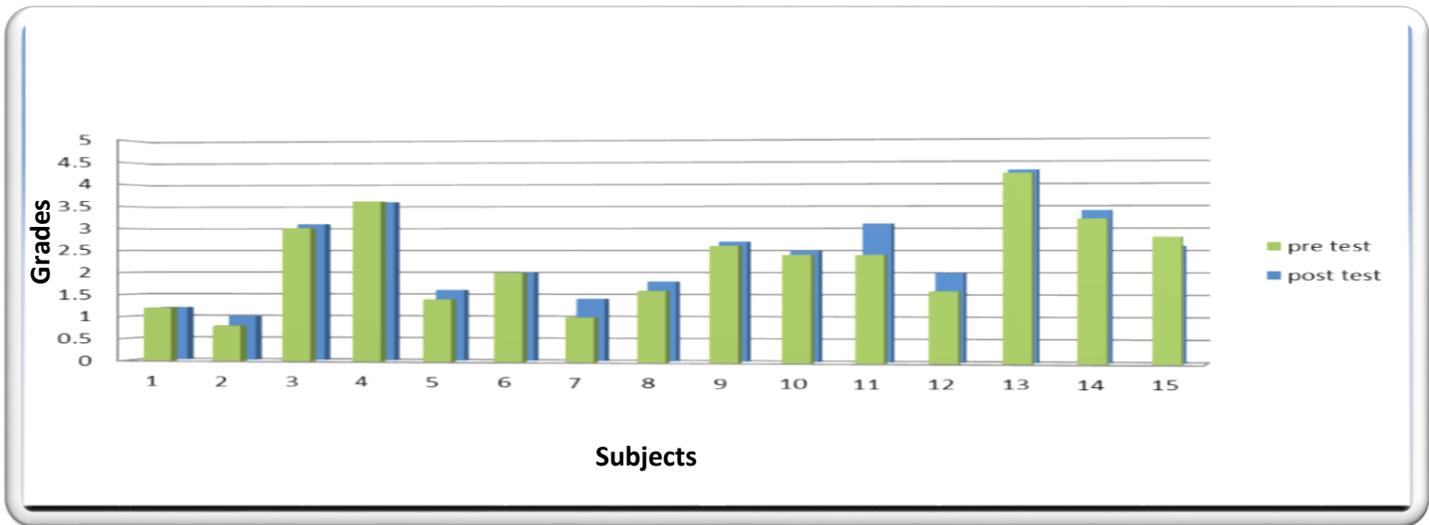


Figure 9: The differences between pre-test and post-test scores for control group.

As demonstrated in figure 9, there is a slight improvement in the young learner’s performance in the post test. Some cases are even stable. Besides, the following table shows the mean and standard deviation in the experimental and control group in pre-test and post-test in grade 3.

$$\text{Mean} = \text{Average total} = \frac{\text{Sum (Total grades)}}{\text{nb. of subjects}}$$

The standard deviation can be thought of measuring how far the data values lie from the mean.

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
Variables	M	SD	M	SD
Pre-test	1.9	0.7	2.3	0.99
Post-test	3.6	0.8	2.4	0.95

Table 5: Mean M and Standard Deviation SD

$$(\bar{X})_{\text{Experimental Initial}} \quad (\bar{X})_{\text{Experimental Final}}$$

$$(\bar{X})_{\text{pre}} < (\bar{X})_{\text{post}}$$

This means that average grades of the experimental class after the training sessions are higher than average grades before the experiment. Also, the standard deviation of pre-test < post-test means that the marks are spread somehow far from the mean, but shows improvement in young learners’ performance though there is an obvious difference in their performance.

c- Grade 5: Experimental group

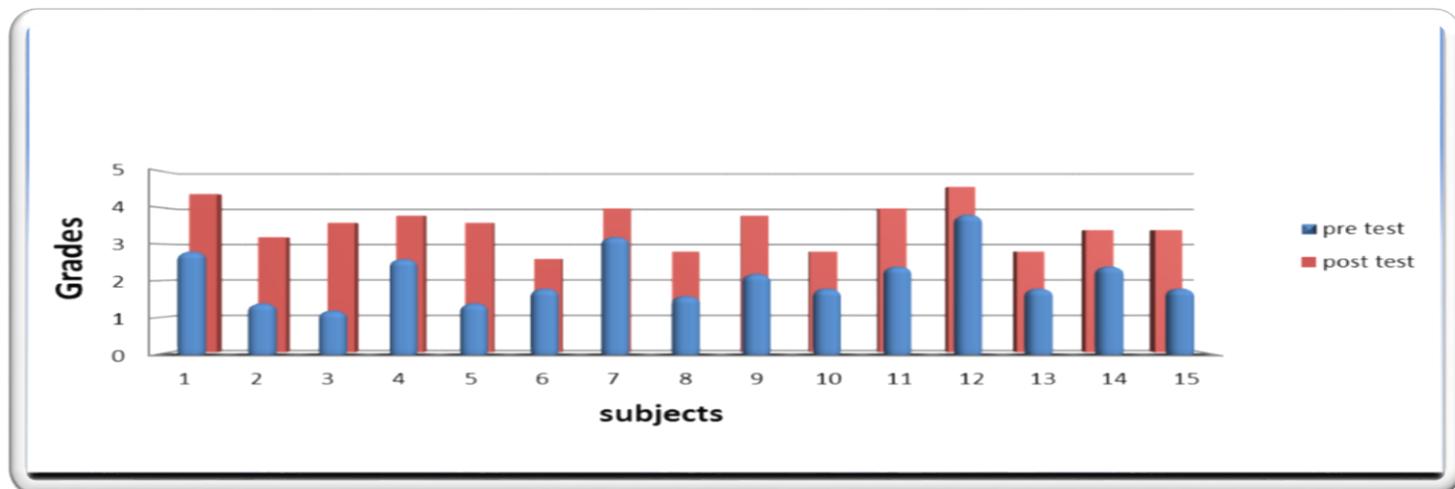


Figure 10: The differences between pre-test and post-test scores for experimental group.

As demonstrated in figure 10, the young learners' scores in the post-test are higher than those obtained in the pre-test. There is an obvious improvement in all results of the post-test in comparison with the pre-test.

d- Grade 5: Control group

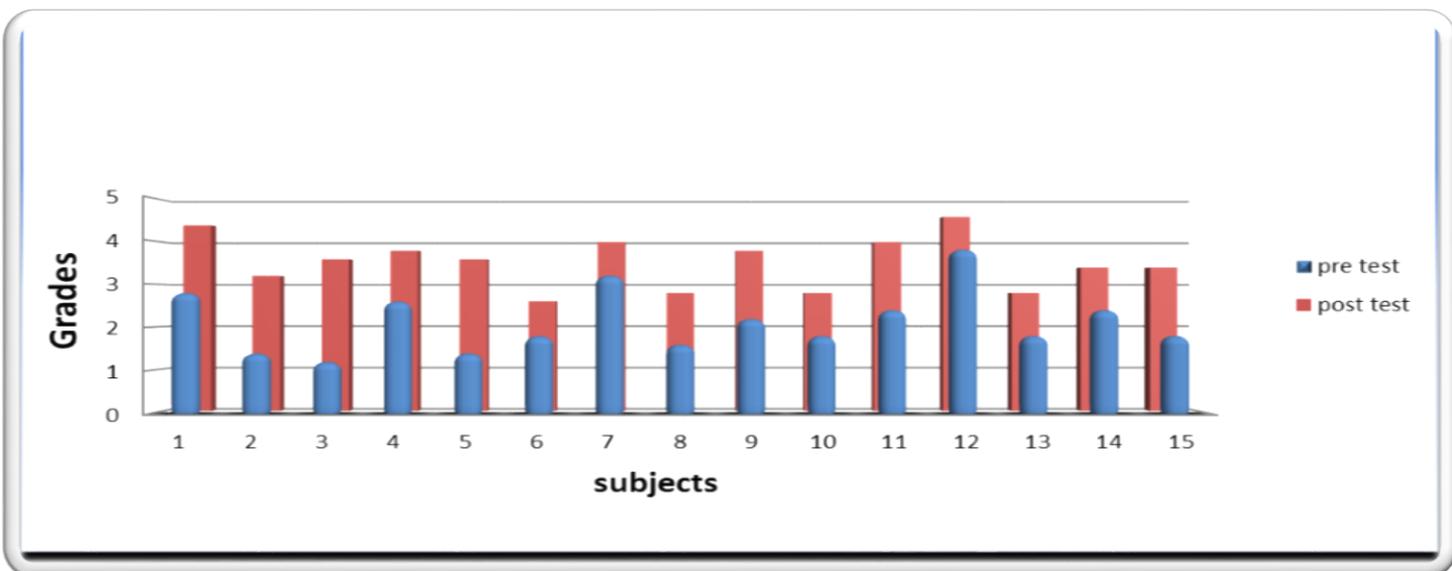


Figure 11: The differences between pre-test and post-test scores for control group.

As demonstrated in figure 11, nine (9) young learners have shown slight improvement in the post test while 6 have shown no change in their scores. Similarly; table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test in grade 5.

Variables	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	M	SD	M	SD
Pre-test	2.1	0.7	2.3	1
Post-test	3.5	0.6	2.4	1

Table 6: Mean M and Standard Deviation SD

$$(\bar{X}) \text{ pre} < (\bar{X}) \text{ post}$$

This means shows that average grades of the experimental class after the training sessions are higher than average grades before the experiment. Also, the standard deviation of pre-test < post test. This means that the marks are spread around the mean, so all young learners perform equally.

3. Questionnaires about Young Learners` Attitude towards Using Songs

The results of the structured questionnaire that reflected young learners` attitude in (grades 3 & 5) experimental groups towards using English songs to improve their listening comprehension were as follows.

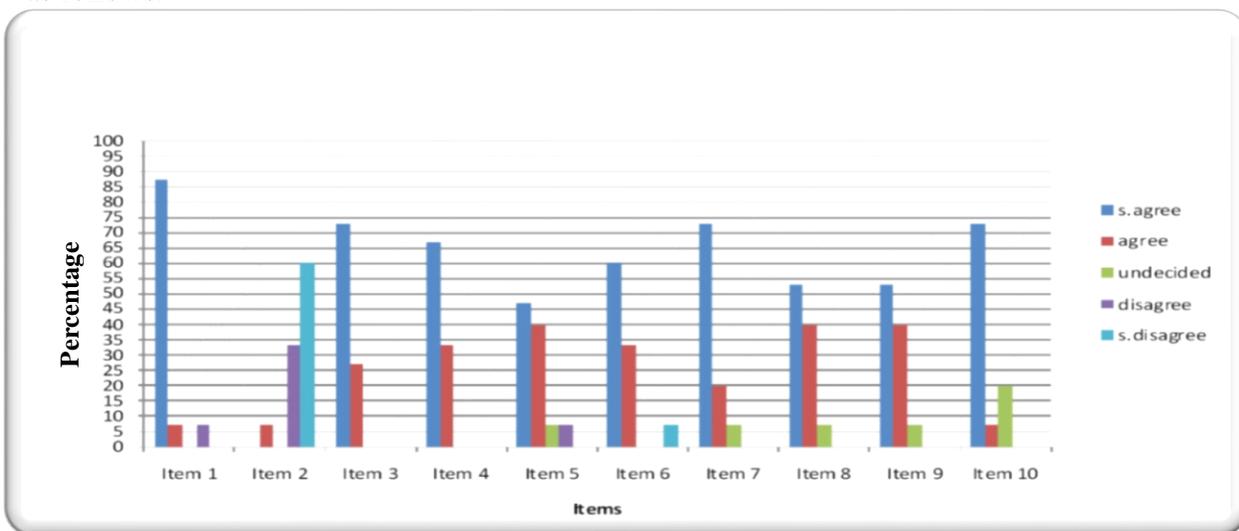


Figure12: Experimental group`s attitude towards using songs in grade 3.

Responding to item 1, which measures desire to learn English songs, 13 young learners reported that they strongly agree; 1 answered that desire motivated him to learn English songs, while there was only one student who did not show any kind of interest in learning English through songs.

Reacting to item 2, which measures the difficulty of English songs, 9 young learners strongly disagreed about the degree of difficulty of English songs, 5 of them just disagreed, while only one young learner agreed about the difficulty of English songs.

Answering item 3, which measures the feelings of relaxation while listening to English songs, 11 young learners strongly agreed that they felt relaxed while listening to English songs, while the other 4 just agreed about experiencing such a feeling.

Replying to item 4, which measures the enjoyment young learners get while singing English songs, 10 young learners strongly agreed about the pleasure they got while singing a song while the other 5 just expressed their mere agreement.

Responding to item 5, which measures the feeling that learning through English songs is easier than learning through a textbook, 7 young learners found it very easy to learn through songs, 6 agreed about the simplicity of learning through songs, while 1 young learner did not show any response. In addition, 1 young learner contradicted the other learners and stated that learning through textbooks was easier than learning through songs.

Regarding item 6, which measures correct pronunciation, 9 young learners strongly agreed that songs helped in improving their pronunciation, 5 of them agreed that with songs they could pronounce more correctly, while there was one young learner who strongly disagreed because songs did not help him in improving pronunciation.

Answering item 7, which measures the advantages of songs in increasing young learners` range of vocabulary, 11 of the learners strongly agreed that songs helped them remember new words faster than the textbooks did. Moreover, 3 other students agreed that songs could help in widening the range of their vocabulary, while only one student did not respond.

Responding to item 8 that measures the creativity of young learners in writing short songs similar to the original ones, 8 of them strongly agreed that songs could help them write their own short songs by imitating the structure of the original ones. Besides, 3 young learners agreed that with the help of songs they could write their own songs more creatively. However, only 1 student did not respond.

Answering item 9, which measures the improvement of listening skill by using songs, 8 young learners strongly agreed that songs could help them improve their listening comprehension skills. Six (6) students also agreed that their listening comprehension skills improved through listening to English songs. Yet, 1 student did not respond.

Reacting to item 10, which measures the effectiveness of listening to English songs outside school, 11 young learners strongly stated that they listened to English songs outside school; 1 student also agreed that he usually listens to songs. However, 3 students did not respond.

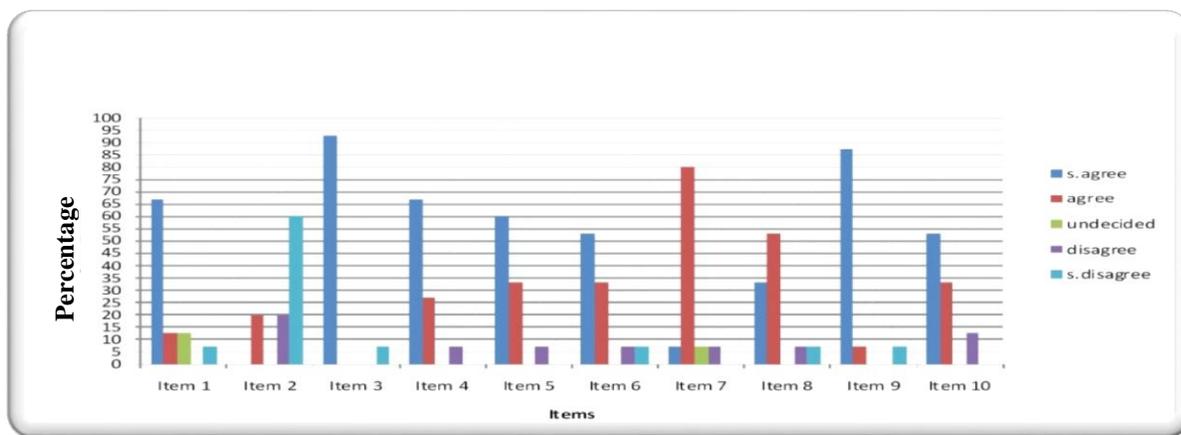


Figure13: Experimental group`s attitude towards using songs in grade 5.

Responding to item 1, which measures one`s desire to learn English songs, 13 young learners reported that they strongly agreed; 3 answered that desire motivated them to learn English songs, while only one student did not show any kind of interest in learning English through songs.

Reacting to item 2, which measures the extent of difficulty of learning English songs, 9 young learners strongly disagreed about the difficulty of English songs, 3 just disagreed, while 3 young learners agreed about the difficulty of English songs and only one student made no response.

Answering item 3, which measures the learner`s feelings of relaxation while listening to English songs, 3 young learners strongly agreed that they felt relaxed while listening to English songs, 5 students showed that they agreed about experiencing such a feeling, while only 1 student did not show any interest, and he strongly disagreed.

Replying to item 4, which measures the enjoyment young learners get while singing English songs, 10 young learners strongly agreed about the pleasure they got while singing a song; 5 expressed mere agreement, while only 1 learner showed disagreement.

Responding to item 5, which measures the feeling, that learning through English songs is easier than learning through a textbook, 9 young learners found it very easy to learn through songs; 6 agreed about the simplicity of learning through songs while 1 young learner disagreed, stating that learning through textbooks was easier than learning through songs.

Regarding item 6, which measures correct pronunciation, 8 young learners strongly agreed that songs helped in improving their pronunciation, and 6 just agreed that with songs they could pronounce more correctly, as opposed to 1 one young learner who just disagreed and another who strongly disagreed because he felt that songs did not help him improve his pronunciation.

Answering item 7, which measures the advantages of songs in increasing young learners' range of vocabulary, 1 young learner strongly agreed that songs helped him to remember new words better than textbooks did. Besides, 12 students agreed that songs could help in increasing their range of vocabulary, while only one student did not respond and two others disagreed.

Responding to item 8 that measures the creativity of young learners in writing short songs similar to the original ones, 5 of the learners strongly agreed that songs helped them write their own short songs by imitating the structure of the original ones. Besides, 8 young learners agreed that grammar exercises were easily practiced in songs. However, 3 students disagreed.

C- Statistical Treatment of Data:

The findings that were obtained from the examinations of the data collected in this study could present essential information to test the three research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the factors that hinder the improvement of young learners' listening comprehension in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5)? The results were analyzed and data was obtained from a semi-structured interview with 7 English language teachers.

The results of the interview, conducted before using English songs to improve listening comprehension, showed that listening was the most difficult skill for young learners who panicked when they heard the word "listening." Some teachers considered that the pronunciation factor was the most difficult one for primary students who were unable to understand the content of any listening task. Other teachers complained about the affective factors such as nervousness and anxiety that also hindered young learners' understanding of the listening material. In addition, some factors such as the difficulty of the listening material and skill factors like students' inability to guess from context, to listen to word by word, and to activate their background knowledge prevented primary students from listening development. Environmental factors such as the

crowded classrooms especially in public schools also inhibited the listening comprehension of young learners. It was obvious that English language teachers faced a lot of challenges at public schools such as lack of appropriate tools and materials, and proper equipment. It seemed that most of the teachers did not have a clear idea of the learning objectives and goals. Although all of them agreed that authentic materials were effective in teaching listening comprehension, none tried to sacrifice time and prepare materials to enhance the listening comprehension skills of young learners. Casting a close look at Lebanese public schools, as well as at their teaching curricula, revealed that listening skill was not set as a priority in teaching. This was actually one of the main reasons why necessary time was not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of young learners in Lebanese public schools.

Research Question 2: How would listening to English songs improve listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 &5) ?

The answer to the above question relied on the results of pre-tests and post-tests for both grades (3 & 5). Comparing the results of the experimental groups with those of the control groups in both grades, we can see that the use of English songs has contributed significantly to the improvement of listening comprehension in primary cycles. This is apparent in the noticeably gained scores recorded by the experimental group in grade 3. Their mean score in the pre-test was 1.9, whereas in the post test it was 3.6. This showed that the learners gained 1.7.

Research Question 3: What is the attitude of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5) towards using English songs to improve their listening comprehension?

The results of the questionnaire, conducted after the post-test, in both grades (3 & 5) for the experimental groups, indicated that most of the young learners found English songs quite helpful in improving their listening comprehension skills. In grade 3, items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 10 were related

to the variable of learning motivation, while items 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were related to the variable of performance. With respect to the first variable of learning motivation, a high number of young learners strongly agreed about having the desire to learn English songs. While listening to English songs, they felt relaxed and later they enjoyed singing them outside school. It seemed obvious that learning through songs for young learners was more enjoyable and rewarding than learning through textbooks. Regarding the variable of performance, a high number of students strongly disagreed about the difficulty of songs. Instead, the results showed that songs improved their pronunciation, range of vocabulary, writing style and listening comprehension skills. In grade 5, items 1, 3, 4 and 5 were related to the variable of learning motivation, while items 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were related to the variable of performance.

With respect to the first variable of learning motivation, young learners showed the same attitude as their friends did in grade 3 with some slight differences. Regarding the variable of performance, a high number of students strongly disagreed about the degree of difficulty of songs.

In addition, the results showed that songs improved their pronunciation, range of vocabulary, grammar and listening comprehension. Therefore, the result was so reasonable because the major purpose of using English songs was to create an enjoyable learning environment to motivate students to learn English interestingly and to improve their listening comprehension skills.

D- Discussion

This study investigated the effectiveness of using English songs to improve the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5). My first research question dealt with the factors that hinder young learners' listening skill in the primary years. The teachers pointed out many factors that hinder young learners' listening comprehension, mainly pronunciation, affective factors, listening material and environmental factors. In fact, the

challenges that teachers face in their jobs have adverse consequences on young learners' performance in listening comprehension. Not only is the use of a conventional method in teaching English language unattractive to students, but it is also frustrating for teachers. The results of the interview conducted with the teachers demonstrated that the listening skill has received only a slight emphasis on teaching English as a foreign language in Lebanese public schools.

According to Rost (2002), listening is an important skill for students of second language, for mastering this skill should be viewed as an integral part of learning and communicating in the target language effectively. Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skill was more important than other skills as a factor contributing to academic development (Coakley & Wolvin; 1997). Boyle (1984) indicated the factors that are regarded as the most salient influences on EFL, namely listening comprehension factors that relate to the listener, the speaker and the materials. This is in agreement with the view of Scarcella and Oxford (1992), who stated that students' anxiety about not understanding anything can lead them to discouragement, fatigue and a general sense of failure. Moreover, Sharpe (2001) claimed that the promotion of children's speaking and listening skills lies at the heart of affective learning in all subjects of the primary curriculum.

Therefore, ESL/ EFL teachers have to consider the development of children's listening skill as a key aim of primary teaching, so they have to equip children with the best strategies for effective listening. The second research question of this study concerned the role of English songs in improving young learners' listening skill in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5).

The results demonstrated that integrating English songs into L2 classroom activities can have a positive effect on the listening comprehension of young learners, provided that the task given to them is in harmony with their level of proficiency. Comparing the results of the experimental groups with those of control groups in both grades (3 & 5), we can see that the use

of songs has contributed significantly to the improvement of young learners` listening skill. This is apparent in the noticeably very good performance of experimental groups in the post-tests. Hence, this result suggests that the experimental groups who listened to English songs had a better performance than the control groups who followed traditional listening content of the curriculum.

Cameron (2001) demonstrated that the use of songs and rhymes is important for young learners in foreign language classrooms. This is clearly evident in the results of the present study that showed the numerous advantages of teaching songs to young learners in cycles one and two. According to Djigunovich and Vilke (2000), songs create an opportunity for young learners who often feel shy to join in the classroom activities. This is also in agreement with the view of Cullen (1999) who demonstrated that songs are significant tools in teaching ESL/EFL because students love listening to music in a language classroom environment and they often hold strong views about it. Therefore, the results of this study favored the use of English songs as effective tools to enhance young learners` listening comprehension and disapprove the use of non-authentic materials teaching listening comprehension skills.

The third research question of this study reflected the young learners` attitude of the experimental groups (grades 3 & 5) towards using English songs for the purpose of improving their listening comprehension skills. Based on the above –mentioned results, the study concluded that most of the young learners enjoyed and appreciated learning English through listening to songs. The findings showed that young learners were extremely motivated to learn English and to enhance their listening abilities. According to young learners` responses, it could be elicited that most of these learners learnt how to pronounce words, how to remember a big range of vocabulary, how to practice grammar exercises and how to write short lyrics and sing songs.

All these observations are in accordance with the notions forwarded by Sharpe (2001) who believed that by using songs pupils gradually internalize the structures and patterns of the foreign language as well as the specific language items that the teacher wants them to learn. She also added that songs provide an occasion for real language use in a fun and enjoyable situation.

Besides, Davies (2000) revealed that children are particularly receptive to sound and rhythm, with musical intelligence appearing early on their intellectual development. So, it is very essential to show how songs can be implemented to enable teachers to improve the listening comprehension skills of young learners.

Therefore, the use of songs serves the purpose of improving the listening comprehension skills of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5) effectively and efficiently. Songs should be carefully selected to suit the young learners' abilities, and the lyrics should be clear. Finally, it is worth noting that the vocabulary in the songs should be appropriate to the students' proficiency level.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

This chapter demonstrates the summary of the findings that were obtained from the examinations of the data collected in this study. It states the conclusion based on the achieved results. This chapter also proposes some implications for using English songs in the Lebanese Public English Language Curriculum and suitable recommendations for foreign language teachers, curriculum designers and further research.

A- Summary

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of English songs on improving the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5). The subjects were 60 young learners from grades 3 and 5, in addition to 7 teachers who taught English as a foreign language to grades in cycles one and two. The present research developed three strategies for data collection. The strategies were: semi –structured interview with 7 English language teachers, pre-tests and post-test for the control and experimental group, and a questionnaire about young learners` attitude towards using English songs for the experimental groups in grades 3 and 5. Moreover, three questions were investigated and tested by using the descriptive statistical analysis of the interview, the results of the pre-tests and post-tests and the questionnaire items` scores.

At the beginning, the findings from the teachers` interview indicated that the listening skill was the most difficult skill for young learners. Many factors inhibit young learners` listening comprehension, mainly pronunciation and affective factors. The results of the interview, conducted before using English songs to improve listening comprehension, showed that listening

was the most difficult skill for young learners who panicked when they heard the word “listening.” Some teachers considered that the pronunciation factor was the most difficult factor for primary students who were unable to understand any listening task.

Other teachers complained about the affective factors, the difficulty of the listening material, the skill factors and the environmental factors that inhibit the listening comprehension of young learners. It was obvious that English language teachers faced a lot of challenges at public schools such as lack of appropriate tools and materials, lack of in-service training courses and lack of time. It seemed that most of the teachers did not have a clear idea of the learning objectives and goals. All of them agreed that authentic materials were effective in teaching listening comprehension, yet none tried to sacrifice time and prepare materials to enhance the listening comprehension abilities of young learners. Casting a close look at Lebanese public schools, as well as at their teaching curricula, we can notice that listening skill is not set as priority in teaching. This was actually one of the main reasons why necessary time was not being devoted to listening comprehension activities in the teaching of young learners at Lebanese public schools.

However, after students practiced listening with songs, it was clear that the songs could be considered as the most suitable type of authentic material to develop the learners` listening comprehension skills. Using songs in the classroom motivates students to pay attention. Through songs young learners become familiar with the pronunciation of native speakers. The effectiveness of English songs can also be seen in the results obtained from the post-tests for the experimental groups in both grades 3 and 5.

Besides, it was found that overall class motivation had significantly increased after using songs. Students were motivated to become more active learners. According to students` responses in the questionnaires, it could be elicited that most of the students were fond of learning English

songs and they were interested in learning more after practicing this activity. It was also important to note that young learners' English abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing showed improvement after learning these English songs.

Consequently, the use of songs serves the purpose of improving the listening comprehension of young learners in cycles one and two (grades 3 & 5) in an effective way. Songs should be carefully selected to suit the young learners' abilities, and the lyrics should be clear. In addition, the vocabulary in the songs should be appropriate to the students' proficiency level.

B- Conclusion

The study of the effectiveness of using English songs in improving the listening comprehension of young learners in the primary cycles presented significant results to the Lebanese students and teachers in public schools. The findings of this study could bring to the fore the reasons for considering songs valuable pedagogical tools in teaching listening skills. It is, therefore, concerned in the first instance with highlighting the factors that affect foreign language listening comprehension. It supplies a survey of the most common listening strategies required for improving listening comprehension. This study is entirely devoted to finding out whether using English songs can be used effectively in creating a positive attitude and motivation in young language learners.

The results of this study showed that for these young learners, the use of songs can lead to the attainment of high English language scores. Specifically, the subjects who listened to English songs obtained higher post-test scores than those who strictly followed the guidelines of the traditional listening curriculum. Hence, it is evident that students display a higher level of involvement in and concentration on authentic materials than on artificial materials. Orlava (2003) stated that there is a great connection between students' motivation and authentic materials.

Teachers should be aware that it is of great significance to expose the learners to language in order to facilitate and expedite their learning.

Therefore, no one can deny that learning a language in a pleasant atmosphere is something which is often overlooked by teachers. In this context, it can be said that songs can contribute greatly to the creation of a healthy learning environment, the driving away of boredom, and the improvement of young learners' motivation (Millington, 2011). In terms of attitudes toward learning English, again the experimental group had a more positive attitude toward their learning of English and greater confidence in their ESL instruction than the control group.

While this is quite understandable, a serious problem arises from a practical point of view. There is little that English language teachers can do with respect to the transformation of a big list of suggestions into reality. Most of the teachers lack practical, research-based information, resources, and effective strategies to teach, evaluate and nurture young learners. Also, Lebanese public schools rarely provide their teachers with in-service training opportunities on how to teach listening comprehension to young learners in primary cycles. Even the designed syllabus for teaching English to young learners in primary cycles concentrates mostly on the reading and writing skills with little emphasis on the listening and speaking skills.

Consequently, meeting the learning needs of young learners to improve their listening comprehension is a big job, one that requires the coordination and collaboration of the educational system. This means that everyone must support the teaching of listening skill through authentic materials, particularly songs. Furthermore, most of the available practical recommendations are subject to situational constraints: that is they lack universal generalization and application cannot, therefore, be prescribed without adapting them to particular learning situations in which they are to be used. For these reasons, what most researchers in the field of education can do at present is

to raise teachers` and curriculum designers` awareness of the importance of using songs to improve listening comprehension skills of young learners in primary cycles. They could provide them with a menu of useful insights and suggestions from which they can select according to their young learners` actual needs.

In this paper, the scope of the study was limited only to one foreign language Lebanese public school. The research was restricted to only a small number of subjects and the researcher could only look at the situation of using songs to teach listening to students at a primary level. Hence, the results could not be generalized to all the schools in Lebanon. Moreover, because of limitation in time and space, the researcher did not have enough opportunities to apply the use of songs on a larger scale. The researcher, therefore, hopes that this paper will be a starting point for further study and new applications.

C- Implications and Recommendations

Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skills were more important than reading skills as a contributory factor to academic development (Coakley&Wolvin ;1997). Thus listening is a fundamental language skill; and as such, it merits a critical priority among the four language skills. As Hansan (2002) pointed out, “listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills” (p.138). More specifically, Demirel (2004) made the strongest claim when he argued that the most effective way to teach listening comprehension, pronunciation and dictation to YLs was through teaching songs.

In the light of the mentioned information, it is obvious that listening to English songs can knock down the young learners` psychological barriers, such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence and apprehension as well as fire the learners` desire to grasp the target language. However, up till now, there has never been any practical study or data collection in Lebanese public schools on the

subject of using English songs to improve young learners` listening comprehension in the primary cycles. There is also a neglect of listening activities prescribed in the students` textbooks. As a matter of fact, most of the teachers in primary public schools lack the interest in teaching due to the daily challenges they face. They show unwillingness to make the development of children`s listening skills a key aim of primary teaching and to equip them with the best strategies for effective listening.

As mentioned earlier, the major findings of this study indicate that effective learning consists in active engagement with language. English songs are wonderful materials in this respect. Furthermore, songs are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic, and full of language we need in real life. This study offers tentative recommendations which may be profitable for teachers to draw upon and to direct their own practice to motivating their learners. These recommendations will be helpful not only for the Lebanese public schools but also for the private schools as well as for all nations that learn and teach English as a foreign language. However, several implications and recommendations for (1) foreign language teachers and learners, (2) curriculum designers, and further research on using English songs to improve young learners` listening comprehension are suggested in this descriptive study.

1. For Foreign Language Teachers and Learners

On the basis of the research findings, some suggestions are herein presented to the two main component elements of the process English language, namely teachers and learners.

a- Teachers should integrate authentic materials such as songs in L2 classrooms to improve the listening comprehension of young learners.

b- Teachers should utilize songs through technology in a classroom environment to attract young learners` attention. The fact is that music soothes students and that melodies, rhythms and rhymes

in a song facilitate language learning and improve students` reading, speaking, writing and listening skills.

c- It is important for teachers to adopt a learner-centered approach, where young learners are able to participate, exploit and experience the meaning of the song themselves.

d- Teachers should choose the songs carefully by taking the audience, objectives, level of students and song content into consideration, and prepare deliberate activities for young learners to make the use of songs more effective.

e- It is important for teachers to use the pre-teaching, while-teaching and post-teaching strategies. In this way, teachers can prepare young learners for what they are going to hear, help them to understand the song through activities, and then move on from listening practice to focus on other language skills such as reading, speaking and writing.

f- Teachers should also design careful listening tasks from the simplest to the most complex and ask for an active, overt students` participation.

g- Moreover, adapting existing children`s songs is one method that teachers can use to increase their repertoire of songs, thus giving them more opportunity to use songs in their teaching contexts.

h- Teachers themselves should be provided with the opportunities to acquire practical skills and the needed knowledge to function effectively. Meanwhile, these teachers and the students should be fostered to understand their own experience when stresses are misplaced in words.

Therefore, songs should be made an integral part of a lesson, since they provide both students and teachers with not only an immensely enjoyable time but also possible intensive language instruction and practice simultaneously. If used properly by the teachers, English songs are excellent means whereby young learners will cultivate interests and high motivation and develop their listening comprehension. Finally, these teachers should be cautioned that

pronunciation should not be overlooked since it has an impact on teachers' performance and subsequently their students' performance.

2. For Curriculum Designers

Educational administrators should take some initiatives to improve the teacher preparation program by introducing adequate skills to meet the learning needs of English language. Guided by the above basic principles, the curriculum for English as a first foreign language should develop the use of English by observing these essential procedures:

a- The most effective way to achieve this purpose is through the adoption of a thematic, integrated, content-based approach to teaching and learning. All skills should be taught equally with a special focus on listening comprehension.

b- Curriculum designers should set a special priority for the teaching of listening skill in primary classes since listening is the initial step of language learning and of language acquisition.

c- The new curriculum should attempt to develop native-like proficiency in English. More specifically; it should stress both fluency and accuracy by exposing students to proper authentic materials such as songs.

d- It is very important to choose meaningful songs that suit the cognitive and linguistic needs of young learners and to implement them in their textbooks .Even though there are a number of different ways that songs can be presented to YLs, the most commonly accepted/recommended way is through the three stages of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening.

e- The curriculum designers should set realistic, achievable objectives that the average teacher/material writer can relate to. Furthermore, these objectives should be illustrated with samples of clear, measurable performance tasks that can be easily implemented in the classroom.

f -The curriculum designers should emphasize the development of the proper study skills which will help students develop into independent learners.

g-Since the goal of classroom listening is to prepare students for real-life listening outside the classroom, it is necessary to implement authentic aural materials such as songs at all levels of language instruction and listening-comprehension training.

h- Finally, listening skill should be given priority in the Lebanese YLs' textbooks as well, and the use of songs as listening materials in YLs' classrooms should be promoted.

In summary, the curriculum should move from a system of language education based on rote learning, linguistic correctness, and cramming of information to a system that promotes autonomous learning, thinking skills, and communicative competence. Proper implementation of the curriculum requires the cooperation of all those involved in the teaching / learning process because it requires radical changes in knowledge, attitude, methodology, instructional materials, and classroom management. The following suggestions are believed to allow for smoother implementation of the proposed study.

3. For Future Research

Further studies are required on the controversial issue of using authentic materials such as English songs to improve young learners' listening comprehension in all cycles.

a- There should be more comprehensive experimental studies for investigating the possible role of authentic material on the self-confidence of L2 listeners.

b- The subjects of this study were only young English learners in cycles one and two, which can endanger the generalizability of the results; hence, further studies are necessary to investigate the effect of authentic material on intermediate and high school language learners.

c- Researchers should conduct further studies using different data sources in order to enhance the literature on the impacts of authentic tasks upon the listening skill.

d- It is clear that we need more research in order to improve the listening skill in Lebanese public schools by using authentic materials.

e- Moreover, deeper analyses that will shed light on the impacts of both authentic tasks and listening anxiety upon the listening process should be provided in the future.

f- The result of this study provides a starting point for further research into what kinds of listening strategies students will mostly use to tackle their listening problems in Lebanon and Middle Eastern countries.

g- Further research should explore the relationship between the learning strategies and learning performance. Hopefully, this study will enable students to understand the importance of using listening comprehension strategies. The study can also shed light on some directions for instructors to construct the effective EFL listening instruction.

h- Finally, because the lyrics of the songs can provide a good context to learn sight words, it is worthy to explore whether students' reading and writing abilities can improve after the creative learning process.

Being a teacher of English language at a public official school, the researcher can clearly see the situation of teaching and learning English at this school. It is worth mentioning in this context that both teachers and students have considered listening skill as the most difficult skill among the four skills. Bearing this in mind, the investigator has conducted this research with a view of the situation of teaching and learning listening skill by applying English songs to improve students' listening skill in primary classes.

Throughout this research, I have analyzed a number of effective ways to teaching listening comprehension to YLs, and have also focused on the problems teachers face in the Lebanese public schools. When there are problems, teachers should see the problems as challenges and look for solutions. In today's world, English is a language spoken worldwide, so if we want our students to compete we should provide them with strong speaking skills which imply good listening skills.

Listening is not an easy task to teach. It demands a great deal of concentration on the part of the student. Teachers will not give successful listening classes if they do not have appropriate equipment, classroom environment and students' motivation and interest. However, we must remember that even when the equipment is appropriate, it is also necessary to have access to listening materials which should be selected according to students' grades and needs. After the teacher has these conditions satisfied, he/she has to decide which techniques can be used and which listening activities best help students to learn language easily. If we teach students according to methodologies, we will be able to turn them into effective listeners and consequently, effective speakers.

Therefore, the researcher, undoubtedly, hopes that this paper will be a starting point for evoking in the readers and relevant people some more ideas for further study and new applications. This study is expected to help teachers to contribute to the enhancement of their students' listening comprehension skills.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview with English Language Teachers

Introduction: I start by introducing myself, my position as an English language teacher at Shoueifat Official Secondary School. I thank the participants for taking time out of their schedule to talk with me. Next, I explain the purpose of this project which is to gather information about the factors that hinder the improvement of young learners' listening comprehension in cycles one and two, at Lebanese public schools.

1. Can you tell me which language skill you find the most difficult for young learners?
2. In view of your experience, what are the main factors that hinder young learners' understanding of a listening task?
3. What do you think are the barriers that hinder teachers' method of teaching listening comprehension in cycles one and two at public schools?
4. Are there sufficient listening comprehension exercises in the students' textbooks? How do you feel, in general, about their effectiveness?
5. Do you use other kinds of aural authentic materials to prepare young learners to real-life listening situations?
6. Which materials, authentic or non-authentic, do you think are more effective in teaching listening comprehension for young learners in cycles one and two?
7. Do you think listening skill is emphasized in teaching English as a foreign language at the Lebanese public schools in cycles one and two? Why?

Appendix B

Pre-tests and Post-tests for Grade 3 (Experimental Group)

Grade: 3	<u>Listening Exam</u>	Date:
Students` Name: _____	The Wheels on the Bus	Time:50 min

I-Pre-listening Activities:

1. Introduce the vocabulary by using flashcard pictures.
2. Play the song and get everyone to follow you with the actions.

II- While-listening Activities :

1. Listen and put in the missing words. Choose words from the box. You may use a word more than once. (2.5pts)

The _____ on the bus go round and round
Round and round, round and round
The _____ on the bus go round and round
All through the _____.

The _____ on the bus go "Swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish"
The _____ on the bus go "Swish, swish, swish"
All through the _____.

The _____ on the bus goes "Beep, beep, beep
Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep"
The _____ on the bus goes "Beep, beep, beep"
All through the _____.

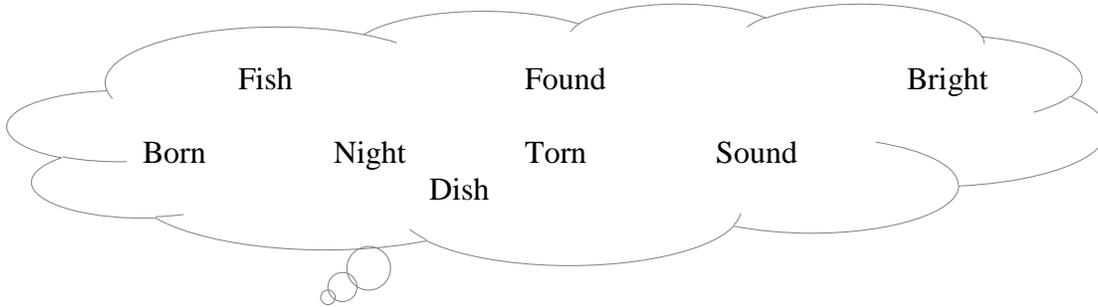
The _____ on the bus go "on and off
On and off, on and off"
The _____ on the bus go "on and off"
All through the _____.

The _____ on the bus go round and round
Round and round, round and round
The _____ on the bus go round and round
All through the _____.

People
Lights
Wipes
Horn
Town
Wheels
Babies

III- Post-listening Activities:

1. Choose from the bubble words that have the same rhyme, and then write them in the following table. (2pts)



Round	Swish	Horn	Light

2. Unscramble these lines to form a short song similar to the above mentioned one. (2.5pts)

- a- Swim, swim, swim
- b- The fish in the sea goes swim, swim, swim
- c- All day long.
- d- Swim, swim, swim
- e- The fish in the sea goes swim, swim, swim

3. Write a short song about the song titled “The lobster that goes pinch in the sea”. (3pts)

Pre-tests and Post-tests for Grade 5 (Experimental Group)

Grade: 5

Listening Exam

Date:

Students`Name:_____

Heal the World

Time: 50 min

I-Pre-listening Activities:

1. Tell students they are going to listen to a song by Michael Jackson. Elicit some of his songs titles.
2. Ask them if they know about Jackson`s charity work (Heal The World and Heal /The Kids Foundation).

II- While-listening Activities : Listen to the song (Heal the World) by Michael Jackson and then answer the following questions.

1.Listen to the song and then complete the missing lyric with suitable word from the box.

There `s a place in your (1)_____

And I know it is (2)_____

And this place could be much

Brighter than (3)_____

And if you really try

You `ll find there `s no need to (4)_____

In this place you `ll feel

There`s no hurt or sorrow

There are ways to get (5)_____

If you care enough for the living

Make a little space, make a better (6)_____

Place

Tomorrow

Heart

There

Love

Cry

2. Put the lyric from the chorus in the right order.

- _____ For you and for me and the entire human race
- _____ Make it a better place
- _____ Heal the world
- _____ Make a better place
- _____ There are people dying
- _____ If you care enough for the living
- _____ For you and for me

3. Circle the word you hear.

If you want to know why
There` s love that cannot (lie/die)
Love is (strong/weak)
It only cares for joyful giving
If we try we (shall/ should)see
In this bliss we cannot feel fear or dread
We stop existing and start living
Then it feels that always
Love` s enough for us (growing/ flowing)
So make a better (world/word)
Make a better (world/word)

III- Post-listening Activities:

1. Write the past simple tense and past participle of the following irregular verbs in the provided space.

Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
1. Make		
2. Grow		
3. Know		
4. Feel		

Appendix C

Syllabus for Grade 3 (Experimental Group)

Incorporations of songs and activities into a sample English language syllabus for grade three students are shown in the following table, along with the target language skill of each topic or lesson.

Topic\ Lesson	Supporting Songs	Target Language Skill
1. Seasons	1. Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	Adjectives\ gap-fill task\ Unscramble sentences\ creative writing
2. Animals	2. Mary Had a Little Lamb	Relative pronouns\long vowels-ay\ silent L exercises
3. Transport	3. London Bridge	Sentence completion\ song dictation(distinction between short and long vowels)
4. Let`s Care For the Endangered Animals	4. Old McDonald Had a Farm	Match sounds of animals\ adverbs\medial vowel exercises \ ee-ea-ie-e \ creative writing
5. The Family	5. Hush , Little Baby	Gap-fill task \ final consonant digraphs \sh\ exercises
6. Oceans and Desert Islands	6. Row, Row Your Boat	Simple present \Long vowels \õ\ - ow exercises
7. Christmas and Easter	7. Jingle Bells	Gap-fill task \ medial short vowel exercises
8. Music and Movement	8. Let` s Move	Sentence completion\ contractions\ creative writing

Syllabus for Grade 5 (Experimental Group)

Incorporations of songs and activities into a sample English language syllabus for grade five students are shown in the following table, along with the target language skill of each topic or lesson.

Topic / Lesson	Supporting Songs	Target Language skill
1. Work	1. People Work	Gap-fill task/ match synonyms / simple present creative writing
2. Human Rights	2. Imagine	Opposites / unscramble lines/ creative writing
3. Weather	3. If All the Little Rain Drops	Song dictation exercise/ 2 nd Conditionals
4. Environment	4. Earth Song	Gap-fill task / Song discussion / creative writing
5. Outer Space	5. The Solar System Song	Gap-filling exercises/ adjectives
6. Slavery	6. Ebony and Ivory	Match antonyms/ phrase order / creative writing
7. Nature	7. A Life on the Ocean Waves	Gap-fill task / comparative adjectives
8. Human Relationships	8. My Heart Will Go On	Gap-fill activity / unscramble lines/contractions/ simple past

Appendix D

Sample Song for Grade 3 (Experimental Group)

Grade: 3	<u>Listening Exam</u>	Date:
Students` Name : _____		Time:50 min

I-Pre-listening Activities:

1. At what time of the day do stars appear in the sky?
2. Are the stars bigger than the sun?

II- While-listening Activities : Listen to the song (Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star) and then answer the following questions.

1. Listen and fill in the missing words .Choose words from the box. You may use a word more than once.

Twinkle, twinkle,(1) _____ star,
How I wonder what you are.
(2) _____ above the world so high,
Like a (3) _____ in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, (4) _____ star,
How I wonder what you are!

When the blazing sun is gone,
When there's nothing he shines upon,
Then you show your little (5) _____,
Twinkle, twinkle, through the (6) _____.
Twinkle, twinkle, (7) _____ star,
How I wonder what you are!

In the (8) _____ blue sky so deep
Through my curtains often peep
For you never(9) _____ your eyes
Till the morning sun does (10) _____
Twinkle, twinkle,(11) _____ star
How I wonder what you are
Twinkle, twinkle,(12) _____ star
How I wonder what you are.

Diamond

Light

Little

Close

Night

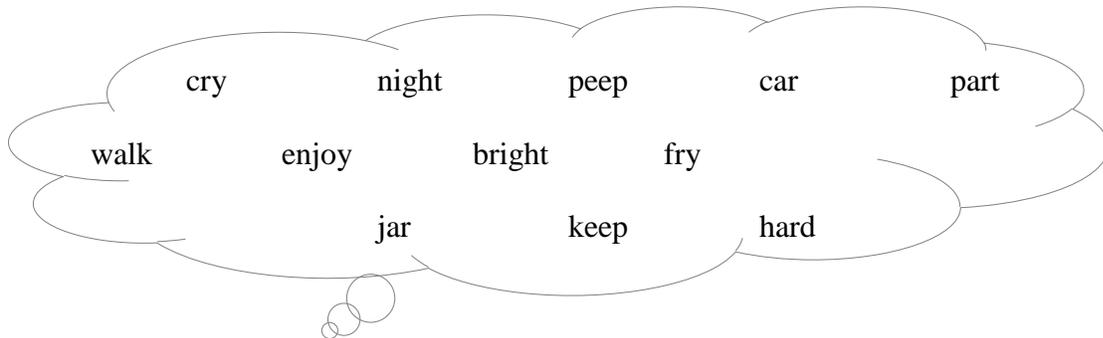
Rise

Dark

Up

III- Post-listening Activities:

1. Choose from the bubble words that have the same rhyme, and then write them in the following table.



Star	High	Light	Deep

2. Arrange these lines in order to form a song similar to the one you listened to.

- Up above the world so high,
- Shining, shining, big round moon,
- How I like to visit you soon,
- Shining, shining, big round moon,
- Like a baseball in the sky.
- How I like to visit you soon.

Sample Song for Grade 5 (Experimental Group)

Grade: 5

Listening Exam

Date:

Students`Name: _____

Time: 50 min

I- Pre-listening Activities:

Discuss the following questions with the students after they read lines 1 through 6.

1. Where do you think her boyfriend is?
2. Have you watched (*The Titanic*) before? What happened to Rose and Jack?

II- While-listening Activities : Listen to the song (My Heart Will Go On) by Celine Dion from the movie (*The Titanic*) and then answer the following questions.

1. Fill in the blanks with suitable words from the box.

Every night in my _____
I see you, I _____ you
That is _____ I know you, go on
Far across the _____
And spaces _____ us
You have _____ to _____ you, go on

Feel

Show

Dreams

You

Between

Distance

How

Come

2. Match each of the following letters with its relevant number.

A- Near, far.....

B- I believe that

C- Once more.....

D- And you're

E- And my heart

1. () you open the door

2. () here in my heart

3. () wherever you are

4. () will go on and on

5. () the heart does go on

3. Unscramble the words to fill in the blanks.

Love can _____ us one time (o-t-u-c-h)

And last for a _____ (t-e-m-i-f-i-l-e)

And never let go till we're _____ (o-n-g-e)

Love was when I _____ you (d-e-o-l-v)

One true _____ I hold to.(i-m-e-t)

In my life we'll _____ go on (w-a-l-a-y-s)

4. Circle the correct answer from the words in parantheses.

Near, far, (wherever / whatever) you are

I believe that the (cart/ heart) does go on

Once more you open the (door/floor)

And you're here in my heart

And my heart will go on and on

You're here, there's nothing I (fear/ hear)

And I know that my heart will go on

We'll (stay/ pray)forever this way

You are (safe/save)in my heart

And my heart will go on and on

III- Post-listening Activities:

1. Rewrite each sentence. Write a contraction in place of the underlined words.

a. Lifeboats were not enough for all the people on the ship.

b. Survivors from the ship will not forget their tragedy.

c. It is amazing how the well the director combines historical event with a tragic love story.

d. We will always remember this remarkable and romantic film.

e. The poor and the rich in the film are not supposed to mingle.

2. Correct the underlined mistakes in the following sentences. Then write the correction in the space provided.

a. Rose and Jack falled in a forbidden love. _____

b. Jack maked a promise to love Rose forever. _____

c. A group of explorers knowed about wreck of the Titanic. _____

d. After watching Titanic, viewers all over the world feeled sad. _____

e. Rose seed Jack drawing wonderful pictures. _____

Appendix E

A Questionnaire for Grade 3 (Experimental Group)

Hello, everyone!

I am very glad to have taught you the subject of English language through the use of English songs during the whole semester. Through this questionnaire, I would like to learn how you felt about listening to English songs and if the use of songs improved your English listening comprehension learning.

Many thanks for your participation and cooperation!

Yours Sincerely,

AbeerAbou Ali

English Language Instructor

Part One:

Please **circle** the letters as applicable.

1. Gender: a) Male b) Female
2. Age : a) 8 b) 9 c) 10 d) 11

Part Two:

Answer the following questions by ticking (✓) the answers that best represent your response.

Survey Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have a strong desire to learn English songs.					
2. I find English songs very difficult.					
3. I feel relaxed while listening to English songs.					
4. I enjoy singing English songs.					
5. I feel that learning through English songs is easier than learning through the textbook.					
6. I can pronounce more correctly.					
7. I can remember a large range of vocabulary.					
8. I can create my own lyric by imitating the original song.					
9. I feel songs improve my listening comprehension.					
10. I usually listen to English songs outside school.					

A Questionnaire for Grade 5 (Experimental Group)

Hello, everyone!

I am very glad to have taught you the subject of English language through the use of English songs during the whole semester. Through this questionnaire, I would like to learn how you felt about listening to English songs and if the use of songs improved your English listening comprehension learning.

Many thanks for your participation and cooperation!
Yours Sincerely,

AbeerAbou Ali
English Language Instructor

Part One:

Please **circle** the letters as applicable.

1. Gender: a) Male b) Female

2. Age : a) 8 b) 9 c) 10 d) 11

Part Two:

Answer the following questions by ticking (√) the answers that best represent your response.

Survey Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have a strong desire to learn English songs.					
2. I find English songs very difficult.					
3. I feel relaxed while listening to English songs.					
4. I enjoy singing English songs.					
5. I feel that learning through English songs is easier than learning through the textbook.					
6. I can pronounce more correctly.					
7. I can remember a large range of vocabulary.					
8. I can create my own lyric by imitating the original song.					
9. I feel songs can improve my listening comprehension.					
10. I can easily practice English grammar activities in the song.					