



## Exploring the influences of English songs on EFL juniors' listening skill development at Nguyen Tat Thanh University

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**ABSTRACT:** This study mainly investigated the influences of English songs on EFL juniors' listening skill development at Nguyen Tat Thanh University. The study aimed to determine whether English songs would enhance students' listening comprehension, the benefits of English songs on their listening skill improvement, learning experiences with English songs, and some challenges of English songs on the listening skill development. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods through the questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The results showed that students' listening skills had improved significantly. Through English songs, students were able to improve many other abilities, including better vocabulary recognition, better understanding of different accents, and improved comprehension of spoken English in a more natural way. The study found that English songs were an effective supplementary tool in EFL listening instruction and recommended that they should be incorporated into curriculum to help university-level learners have more enjoyable and authentic language learning experiences.

**KEYWORDS:** English songs, EFL juniors, Listening skill development, Nguyen Tat Thanh University

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the world's current fast globalization, English is becoming a necessary language for communication in almost every aspect of life. Because of this, being able to communicate effectively in English is becoming more and more crucial. Of the four fundamental language skills, listening plays an important role in English learning. Due to variations in accent, pace, and informal language, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners sometimes find it difficult to comprehend native speakers, making listening comprehension especially difficult for them. The need for university students in Vietnam to improve their listening abilities has grown more obvious, particularly for juniors who have to develop their English skills for their future jobs.

There have been many studies that have shown that using English songs in the learning process can help improve speaking ability as well as vocabulary. Researchers like Romaniuk (2019) have shown that songs can serve as valuable tools for introducing new linguistic concepts, such as word meanings, grammatical structures, and contextual usage. According to Richards and Rodgers (2016), songs enhance listening comprehension, pronunciation, and motivation. Songs also provide contextual learning opportunities, allowing students to acquire vocabulary and language patterns more effectively through the emotional and real-life situations depicted in the lyrics (Vishnevskaja & Zhou, 2019; Tomczak & Lew, 2019). Despite the numerous benefits of using English songs in language learning, there is still a lack of research that specifically focuses on the impacts of English songs on juniors' listening skill development at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

English songs have the potential to improve listening skills because they feature a variety of accents, slang, idioms, and cultural expressions, and by providing real-life uses of the language (Tomczak & Lew, 2019). Besides, the melody and repetition of songs can enhance the enjoyment and memorability of listening exercises and can help to retain the language for a long time (Nguyen, 2023). Songs help students better grasp the subtleties of spontaneous communication, thereby bridging the gap between academic language training and everyday language. Although English songs have many uses, their success rate is quite low compared to the EFL environment.

By investigating how students perceive the contribution of songs to their listening skills and the increase in their listening comprehension, this study will shed light on the usefulness of using songs in EFL instruction. It will also help instructors understand which types of songs are most useful for enhancing listening skills by using certain genres, song structures, or thematic materials.

To carry out this study, the following research questions will be addressed:

- (1) How do juniors' attitudes towards the influences of English songs on their listening skill development at Nguyen Tat Thanh University?



- (2) What are benefits of using English songs on juniors' listening improvement?
- (3) What learning experiences do juniors have with English songs?
- (4) What are some challenges of using English songs on juniors' listening improvement?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening comprehension is arguably the key to developing language skills for EFL students. Of the four main skills- listening, speaking, reading, and writing- listening is considered a precursor to understanding and producing spoken language. Given the global importance of English, it is important that learners, especially at the university level, develop strong listening skills to succeed in both their academic and professional lives. Over the past decades, educators have been adopting a variety of alternative methods to improve listening skills, one of which is the use of English songs. The study focuses on the potential impacts of English songs on the development of juniors' listening skills at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

### 2.1. The role of listening in EFL education

Listening is one of the most important skills in learning a foreign language. Vandergrift (2007) asserts that listening is not simply a passive reception of information but an active activity in which learners decode sounds, evaluate meaning, and understand context. When we acquire good listening skills, it helps improve our speaking, reading, and writing performance, among other areas of language acquisition (Lynch, 2009). Listening is very important, but EFL learners often find it difficult, especially when it comes to foreign accents, fast speech, and the complex vocabulary of native speakers. The example of Flowerdew and Miller (2005) pointed out that real listening materials, which frequently contain idiomatic phrases, phrasal verbs, and other language elements that are challenging to understand using conventional classroom approaches, can provide challenges for EFL learners.

### 2.2. The impacts of English songs on listening skill development

Several studies have examined the contribution of English songs to the development of listening comprehension and other language skills. English songs allow students to be exposed to real, everyday language, which is a big advantage over traditional educational resources. Krashen (1982) states that input is extremely important for foreign language learners. Students are exposed to real-life speech patterns, colloquialisms, idioms, and accents through English songs. Otherwise, classroom activities may not be beneficial to them. This exposure increases their ability to understand the language used in everyday speech, which is essential for real-life interactions (Davis & Rinvoluceri, 1988).

English songs have been demonstrated to enhance a number of listening comprehension characteristics. Goh (2000) shows that song listening makes it easier for students to identify words in linked speech when sounds may be decreased or omitted. Singing helps students recognize words and phrases that they would struggle with in more formal or academic settings because of their repetitive nature. Students' passive and active listening abilities can be enhanced by repeatedly exposing them to genuine speech patterns and pronunciation patterns.

### 2.3. Vocabulary and pronunciation improvement through songs

English songs not only help develop listening comprehension but also help develop vocabulary. Songs often contain idioms, vocabulary, and repetitive phrases that students do not often encounter in textbooks. Learners are more likely to remember new vocabulary when they are exposed to these words and phrases repeatedly in a memorable and contextualized way (Teşiş, 2015). Also, the rhythmic quality of songs helps students remember better because words associated with rhythm are easier to remember.

The ability to improve pronunciation is a prominent benefit of using songs in language learning. English songs familiarize students with the natural sounds of the language as well as vivid examples of intonation, stress and correct pronunciation. Gilakjani (2012) has shown that students can recognize and understand intonation patterns effectively through songs. This is very important for the development of natural speaking and listening skills. Learners can improve and enhance their language skills, especially the rhythm, sound, and intonation of English, by singing along to the lyrics.

In addition, Gilakjani (2012) indicates that songs play an important role in developing learners' abilities to pay attention to details. When listening to songs, students not only practice listening skills but also improve their ability to absorb information, which is especially useful in everyday discussions. They have to focus simultaneously on the overall message as well as specific words and phrases, thereby improving their attention and ability to analyze details in communication.



## 2.4. Benefits of English songs in language learning

According to Hidi and Renninger (2006), students tend to be more actively involved in the learning process, and English songs can make language learning more interesting. Additionally, by incorporating songs into the EFL curriculum, teachers can create an engaging and dynamic learning environment that encourages students to engage in developing their listening skills. To improve their listening skills outside of classrooms, students need to practice their listening regularly in their free time and find out songs that they enjoy. Songs in teaching also promote a positive attitude towards language learning and motivate students to develop their learning process (Thang et al., 2024).

## 2.5. Challenges of English songs in students' listening development

Although there are many benefits to using English songs, they still have some challenges of developing juniors' listening skills. Firstly, the complexity of their lyrics is a common problem, which can make it difficult for beginners or intermediate learners to fully understand, especially if the singers has an accent or is singing fast (Fatimatu et al., 2024). Secondly, the formal English typically taught in schools does not always reflect the common language used in songs. That is the reason why teachers have to choose songs appropriate to students' levels to ensure that they can catch up with what singers perform (Thang & Du, 2024).

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

This section describes the study's design and instrument, participants, and data analysis used to investigate how English songs affect the listening skill development of EFL juniors at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

### 3.1. Research design and instrument

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods in understanding attendees' attitudes towards using songs in developing their listening skills. Through these methods, the author can learn about students' attitudes towards using English songs in their listening skill improvement; some benefits and challenges of English songs to juniors' listening skill development. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through three in-depth interviews, including one lecturer and two juniors who had ever experienced with using English songs in English teaching and learning. This contributed to modifying and making clear some issues that quantitative data had not done well.

### 3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were 50 EFL juniors at Nguyen Tat Thanh University. They were conveniently selected and based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study conducted in semester 2, academic year 2024 - 2025.

### 3.3. Data analysis

Students' attitudes and opinions regarding the usage of English songs to improve listening skills were analyzed through the SPSS 27.0 software. Descriptive statistics including min, max, mean and standard deviation were converted. This provided accurate and reliable results before conclusions about the impacts of English songs on the development of EFL juniors' listening skills were withdrawn.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

This section presents the research results in the aspects of students' attitudes towards the influences of English songs on their listening skill development, benefits of English songs on students' listening skill improvement, learning experiences with English songs and their challenges on students' listening improvement.

### 4.1. Students' attitudes towards the influences of English songs on their listening skill development

Table 1. Students' attitudes towards the influences of English songs on their listening skill development

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
English songs are helpful for my listening skill improvement.	50	1.0	5.0	4.10	1.129
I enjoy listening to English songs as part of my English learning process.	50	1.0	5.0	3.54	1.313
I prefer learning English through songs rather than traditional classroom materials.	50	1.0	5.0	3.72	1.246



I feel more motivated to practice my listening via using English songs.	50	1.0	5.0	4.18	1.063
Listening to English songs is an enjoyable way to enhance my language skills.	50	1.0	5.0	3.60	1.414
English songs are an effective tool for my listening proficiency.	50	1.0	5.0	3.72	1.278
<b>Average</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>1.241</b>

The results in Table 1 show students' attitudes of English songs on their listening skill development. This can be seen through the mean scores ranging from 3.54 to 4.18. Particularly, the highest mean in this group falls into the item '*I feel more motivated to practice my listening via using English songs*' (M = 4.18). The next item with its mean in the second (M = 4.10) belongs to '*English songs are helpful for my listening skill improvement*'. Two other ones with the same means in the third (M = 3.72) are '*I prefer learning English through songs rather than traditional classroom materials; English songs are an effective tool for my listening proficiency*'. Meanwhile, two last items with their means at 3.60 and 3.54 in the group are '*Listening to English songs is an enjoyable way to enhance my language skills*' and '*I enjoy listening to English songs as part of my English learning process*' respectively. Generally, the overall mean and standard deviation in this group are 3.81 and 1.241. This reflects students' various viewpoints on English songs for their listening skill development. These differences can be seen via min and max values as well as standard deviation of each item in Table 1 above. However, a majority of participants agreed that English songs had positive effects on their listening skill improvement.

In the interview related to the impacts of English songs on EFL juniors' listening skill development, interviewees 1 and 3 confirmed that English songs brought a lot of benefits to students. Firstly, they helped learners be familiar with different accents of various English speaking areas in the world. Secondly, their lyrics made students more motivated and interested in English learning. Thirdly, learners could improve their lexical knowledge and pronunciations. Especially, they were adapted to different speeds of songs that they encountered.

#### 4.2. The benefits of English songs on students' listening skill improvement

Table 2. The benefits of English songs on students' listening skill improvement

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Listening to English songs helps me proficient in spoken English.	50	1.0	5.0	3.76	1.135
English songs are good for me to recognize new words and expressions.	50	1.0	5.0	4.00	1.143
Listening to English songs helps me be more familiar with different English accents.	50	1.0	5.0	3.76	1.255
Now I can understand English songs better than I used to.	50	1.0	5.0	3.66	1.303
I feel more confident in my listening skill after listening to English songs regularly.	50	1.0	5.0	3.96	1.228
English songs make me better at understanding fast speech in English.	50	1.0	5.0	4.12	1.023
<b>Average</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>1.181</b>

This section focuses on the benefits of English songs on students' listening skill improvement. The results in Table 2 show that students' opinion on these issues is positive, with the overall mean score at 3.88. Remarkably, the item with the highest mean (M = 4.12) in this group belongs to '*English songs make me better at understanding fast speech in English*' whereas the one with the lowest mean (M = 3.66) falls into '*Now I can understand English songs better than I used to*'. Two other items with their means approximate (M = 4.00 and 3.96) are '*English songs are good for me to recognize new words and expressions*' and '*I feel more confident in my listening skill after listening to English songs regularly*'. And two last ones with their mean at 3.76 are '*Listening to English songs helps me proficient in spoken English*' and '*Listening to English songs helps me be more familiar with different English accents*'.



In addition, standard deviations of all items show a rather high vibration with their overall one at 1.181. This addresses various viewpoints among students towards using English songs on their listening improvement. These varieties can be seen through min and max values in each item spreading from 1 to 5.

Although there are many different thoughts from participants, they generally have positive attitudes on English songs in improving their listening skills. Particularly, interviewee 2 expressed that English songs were very wonderful in language learning. They helped him dip into the English language environment, in which he could be proficient in spoken English, learn new words and expressions. Thanks to English song, he felt more confident in his listening skill. From that, it could be said that English songs were one of the most effective tools in English teaching and learning, especially in developing students' listening skills.

### 4.3. Learning experiences with English songs

**Table 3. Learning experiences with English songs**

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
The lyrics of English songs make me more concentration on my listening activities.	50	1.0	5.0	3.40	1.370
I like singing along with English songs as a way of practicing my pronunciation and listening.	50	1.0	5.0	3.96	1.160
I find it easier to remember vocabulary in English songs.	50	1.0	5.0	3.72	1.356
English songs help me understand cultural aspects of the English-speaking world.	50	1.0	5.0	4.06	1.132
English songs help me focus better on listening exercises in class.	50	1.0	5.0	4.06	1.038
English songs make my learning more fun and engaging.	50	1.0	5.0	3.70	1.266
<b>Average</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>1.220</b>

The learning experiences towards the effectiveness of English songs in improving students' listening skills were positive, with mean scores ranging from 3.40 to 4.06 (see Table 3). Although the participants' opinion varied, the pattern of their responses was quite consistent, with a standard deviation of 1.370. Notably, the items related to cultural understanding and concentration in listening exercises received the highest mean scores (4.06), indicating that English songs are particularly beneficial to students in these areas. The moderate standard deviations indicate that the group has similar views on the appropriateness of songs in learning English. In responding questions in the interview, interviewee 2 and 3 stated that English songs were really beneficial to their listening skill improvement. They supplied the authentic language environment in classroom, made students' learning more fun and relaxing. More importantly, they made learners pay much attention to their listening activities as well as discover cultural aspects from English speaking countries.

### 4.4. Some challenges of English songs on students' listening improvement

**Table 4. Some challenges of English songs on students' listening improvement**

<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I find it difficult to understand some English songs due to their speed and accent.	50	1.0	5.0	3.44	1.431
Not all English songs are appropriate to students' levels.	50	1.0	5.0	3.40	1.370
<b>Average</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>1.401</b>

For both questions, their mean scores were 3.44 and 3.40, indicating a moderate level of agreement among the participants. The standard deviations were quite high, 1.43 and 1.37, respectively, reflecting a wide range of opinions. These findings suggest a notable interest in incorporating English songs into formal language courses, although many students have difficulty understanding English songs due to factors such as speed and accent. The results suggest that educators may face some challenges and excitement when incorporating English songs into English instruction.



The survey results highlighted that EFL juniors at Nguyen Tat Thanh University have a very positive attitude towards using English songs in their learning process. Students find songs to be an enjoyable means of improving their listening skills. When listening to English songs, students find that their comprehension, vocabulary recognition, and confidence have improved significantly. Despite some difficulties, especially with various speed and accents, students are still very interested in incorporating songs into their formal language learning process. These findings support the value of using songs in the English classroom as a supplementary tool to improve students' listening comprehension.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The development of the listening skills of EFL juniors at Nguyen Tat Thanh University was positively affected by English songs. Song-based listening activities demonstrated significant improvements in students' listening comprehension, including understanding spoken vocabulary, recognizing different accents, and processing connected speech. In addition, feedback showed that students felt more confident and motivated when participating in song-integrated lessons compared to traditional listening lessons.

The importance of these results lies in the fact that English songs serve as authentic, emotionally engaging learning materials. English songs often use real language, including informal expressions, natural rhythms, and pronunciation features, in contrast to the scripted dialogues in textbooks. This exposure helps students better understand how English is used in everyday life. English songs provide students with a comfortable learning environment and reduces stress, important factors that support language acquisition, especially for juniors equipping their English language skills for their future jobs.

These results are similar to previous studies. Particularly, Murphey (1992) emphasized that the repetition and melody of songs help students improve their phonemic awareness and vocabulary retention. Similarly, Li and Brand (2009) found that ESL learners were encouraged to listen to music through song-based activities. The present study confirms and expands on these results within the specific context of a Vietnamese university, providing localized evidence that supports the global perspective on songs' role in language education.

In addition, many students in the study shared that their daily habits of listening to English songs out of the classroom became more meaningful when it was integrated into their classroom activities. The connection between formal and informal learning contexts increases students' engagement and reinforces language skills through repeated exposure. Enjoyment also improves concentration and positive attitude towards listening tasks. This can lead to more consistent practice and better results.

These remarkable findings provide suggestions for further research. First, it would be important to examine the long-term impacts of English songs on the development of juniors' listening skills. This could include students following over a semester or an academic year to assess their listening improvement. Second, future studies could determine how different songs can support the development of specific listening skills such as pronunciation, intonation, or idiomatic expressions.

Additionally, the research could be expanded to include comparisons across different levels, such as high school students or adult learners, to determine whether the benefits of songs allow learners to control playback and focus on difficult parts. It is also a promising new area of exploration with the application of technology to learning through songs.

In conclusion, the results of this study strongly support the use of English songs as an effective tool to improve the listening skills of EFL juniors. They have a positive impact on comprehension, motivation, and promote participation in the classroom, which suggests that song-based instruction should be used more widely in EFL teaching practice and should be further investigated in future studies.

## 6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study does have several limitations such as the short intervention period, possible biases in survey self-reported data, and the use of convenience sampling, which may restrict how broadly the results may be applied.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study explored the impacts of English songs on the development of juniors' listening skills at Nguyen Tat Thanh University. Its results clearly demonstrated that adding English songs to classroom instruction had positive effects on juniors' listening comprehension in the learning process. Students not only improved their English listening ability but also demonstrated

higher confidence and motivation when participating in listening activities. This was especially beneficial for students because the use of songs created a more enjoyable and less stressful learning environment.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that English language educators consider incorporating English songs into their regular teaching practices, occasionally in listening lessons. Songs can be used in a number of classroom activities. Teachers should ensure that the song is appropriate to the topic, interests, and goals of the students. They should also consider students' levels when choosing suitable songs. Besides, teachers can also encourage students to use English songs out of their classroom as a means of self-learning.

In conclusion, the use of English songs is both pedagogically valuable and engaging for learners, making it an effective strategy for developing listening skills in EFL classrooms. Learning English through songs can significantly enhance EFL students' listening skills if songs are well-prepared and applied creatively and appropriately.

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