

A Questionnaire Project: Using Music and Songs in EFL Classroom to Achieve Language Learning

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating teachers' attitudes towards the use of music and songs in EFL classroom. Purposive sampling was used to select (30) basic school teachers of English at six English medium schools. A questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. The data was then analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS). The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method to interpret the data obtained from the above mentioned instrument. The findings revealed that most of Sudanese EFL teachers believe that songs are not a flexible resource for teachers. Besides, the findings showed that teachers had difficulty to integrate songs that suit young learners' level and interest. Therefore, the study recommended that curriculum and course designers should provide English curricula with different songs that suit different language skills and themes and should conduct training courses that provide EFL teachers with different techniques for adapting and exploiting music and songs for the language classroom.

Keywords: teachers' attitude, music, songs, EFL, young learners

المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من اتجاهات الاساتذة نحو استخدام الموسيقى والاغاني في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. إختار الباحث عينة مقصودة تتالف من (30) استاذا واستاذة في ست (6) مدارس انجليزية، تم استخدام إستبانة كأداة لجمع البيانات. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الإجتماعية، كما تبنى الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتفسيرها. تشير النتائج الى أن اغلب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يعتقدون ان الاغاني ليست مصدراً مناسباً لتدريس اللغة، كما انهم يواجهون صعوبات في ايجاد اغاني تناسب مستوي المتعلمين الصغار. أوصت الدراسة بان تزود مناهج تدريس اللغة الانجليزية للصغار باغاني تناسب مهارات ومواضيع اللغة المختلفة، واقامة دورات تدريبية لتزويد المعلمين باساليب مختلفة تمكنهم من استخدام الموسيقى والاغاني في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية.

INTRODUCTION

In more traditional classrooms, the use of music and songs is considered as a complementary activity which is always done at the end of a lesson or a reward for working hard in class. They are thought of as 'light relief' and not where the real learning takes place. Teachers

associate songs with play, a lack of seriousness, and loss of discipline. When an exam is approaching, or a unit of a textbook has to be finished, then the music and songs are often discarded. In recent years however, the use of music and songs in the EFL classroom has been taken much more seriously.



Apart from being lively and fun they can provide meaningful and purposeful activities that help in improving young English language learners' language achievement.

Based on learning styles of children, classroom instruction should be "enjoyable and interesting; active and hands-on; supported and scaffolded; meaningful and purposeful; and culturally appropriate and relevant" (Shin 2014, 557). Using songs is an example of such activities which due to their nature, fun content, and relaxing features influence the development of second- and foreign-language in children. One reason for the adoption of songs in the teaching of English language in Basic Education, quoting Phillips: "Naturally, children really enjoy learning and singing songs and have fun doing activities while reciting rhymes" (Phillips 1993, pág. 100). Another reason is that children are not aware of the fact that they are learning through songs and rhymes and therefore they see them as a pleasant and fun part of English lessons. Apart from this, songs serve as a good source of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

However, regardless of the musical form and despite a teacher's level of musical training, the value of fostering creativity and enhancing literacy instruction through music is vital in today's diverse early childhood classrooms. This is particularly true for English language young learners (ELYLs) as they develop abilities in listening and speaking

(Peregoy and Boyle 2008; Saricoban and Metin 2000). When students listen to a song for the first time, they naturally want to understand what the lyrics are all about. If the song is engaging, they will want to sing or chant along. Thus, songs are about developing students' listening comprehension and about repeating important words, structures and chunks of language. However, some drawbacks exist among EFL teachers.

Undoubtedly, a deep understanding of the importance of music and songs in students' lives and their learning process will help teachers use songs more effectively. As Isabel (2015), argues that music and songs can add interest to the language classroom routine and potentially improve young children motivation to learn better. For if learning English feels like fun and if the children think they are discovering an exciting new world through English, then learning and adoption of the language should follow naturally. Therefore, this study aims at investigating teachers' attitudes towards the use of songs in EFL classroom. This study will hopefully be significant for both curriculum designers and teachers. It will help them appreciate the importance and effects of music and songs on young learners' language learning. As for the teachers study will help them improve their use of songs and music in the EYL classroom and help them promote a supportive classroom environment that encourage young learners to speak and take a part in oral activities effectively.

Moreover, the findings of this study will provide course designers' insights on feasibility of adopting new techniques into young learner language teaching materials to promote a good and supportive classroom environment that help to motivate the learners and provide teachers with appropriate techniques to create atmosphere more conducive to language learning.

LETTERATURE REVIEW

Advantages of using music and Songs in the EFL Young Learners' classroom

Children often sing songs, hum melodies, and move and dance to music and rhymes (Shin 2017). Gardener (1993) described music as the first intelligence to emerge. Although many teachers agree that music and song are fun and can engage young English language learners and help them explore human vocal expression and communication from speaking to singing, understanding more deeply the following benefits for language learning aid them use songs and rhymes more appropriately to teach young learners in ESL/EFL classes and assist them develop their oral skills:

- Provide authentic, meaningful content: Using songs and rhymes bring authentic language and text types that mirror real-life listening and speaking skills to the classroom. Songs, chants, and rap are naturally a part of children's daily lives and interests. As Shin and Grandall (2014) note, in ESL/EFL classroom, teachers need to motivate young learners by providing meaningful and purposeful activities in a context-rich environment that helps new language become more comprehensible, memorable, and useful.

- Create enjoyable classroom atmosphere:

Fonseca-Mora (2000, 152) points out that "allowing students give a choral melodic repetition of the new language just taught lowers their anxiety filter." Integrating songs and rhymes creates a comfortable and enjoyable classroom environment where children have opportunities to hear sounds of the language, build vocabulary, and improve their listening and speaking skills.

- Aid in retention and comprehension:

The rhythm and repetition in songs help learners retain new language (Forster 2006). When children sing and listen to songs they develop vocabulary and comprehension skills (Hill Clarke and Robinson 2004). Coyle and Gracia (2004, 282) found that young learners of English with limited exposure to the foreign language could identify and retain "vocabulary contextualized in a song" and the authors suggest "it could be that the combination of language, music, and actions made particular words more salient than others."

- Provide opportunities to practice oral language:

Songs and rhymes are effective for practicing oral language. The melody and rhythm are useful for improving children's pronunciation and intonation of second or foreign language. According to Curtain and Dalhberg (2015, 370 – 371), songs in the target language help students "internalize the sounds, vocabulary, rhythm, and structure of the new language. Students can often sing with a better accent than they can speak with at first."

- Improve pronunciation of English Speech sounds:

Mechanical drilling in the production of consonants and vowels both in isolated words and in sentences becomes boring and meaningless. Songs and rhymes, on the other hand, give contextualized practice in all the elements of effective speaking with appropriate intonation patterns, correct pronunciation and clarity of diction. In spite of a limited vocabulary the pupils gradually acquire a mastery over the phonological systems of English (Curtain and Dalhberg 2015).

- Practice in intonation:

Songs and rhymes give practice in meaning-appropriate intonation patterns which include falling, rising- falling, rising and rising-falling tones. These tones are used to convey different meanings through different utterances in specific contexts for particular functions.

- Develop fluency of speech:

Fluency refers to 'smoothness of continuity in oral interaction.' It includes an understanding of how sentences are linked through meaning, structure and variation in word order and ellipsis i.e. substituting or leaving out elements. Songs and rhymes give enjoyable practice in learning to speak confidently, without hesitation and at different speeds.

- Develop intelligibility of speech:

Speech must be understandable. Distinct crisp articulation and clarity of expression contribute to a speaker's message being understood as well as understanding of what others say. The message is well received if words and

sentences patterns of the spoken form can be aurally recognized.

- Enhance literacy instruction:

Songs and rhymes are great tools to enhance literacy instruction (Paquette and Rieg 2008). They are effective for developing phonemic awareness, which is an understanding that speech is built from sounds (Yopp and Yopp2000).some studies show that preschool children who take a part in programs that integrate music and rhymes into instruction "develop phonological awareness, word recognition, and invented spelling abilities more than their classmates who do not participate in such programs." (Bolduc 2008, 1). As Hill Clarke and Robinson (2004, 95) put it, "each time children learn a chant or nursery rhyme, their reading skills grow. Each time children learn a rhythmic pattern, they strengthen their accenting and syllabication skills. Each time children learn a new song their memorization and comprehension skills are enhanced"

Techniques for Implementing music and Songs in the classroom

It is important for the teacher to scaffold instruction; they need to break down tasks into smaller, achievable steps and give children model to follow. Using song and rhyme is not an exception. Regardless of the way it is taught, the key to successful use of a rhyme or song is its application. That is to say that the presentation and activities have to suit young learners' characteristics, their mastery of the language and their interests.

It all depends on their actual presentation in class by means of any electronic device (CD, mp3 player or PC) in the case of a song or outspoken by the own teacher in the case of a rhyme. However, there are stages that need to be followed in order to accomplish the learning goal, and satisfy intellectual and personal needs of each individual child.

Stages of Teaching a Song

The order and the way of teaching songs are similar to the teaching of rhymes. Curtin and Dahlberg (2015, 91-92) point out “songs can play an important role in every unit and every class period. The first stage in teaching a song is creating a purpose for listening which in turn can motivate students to participate in it. Therefore, the pre-listening stage plays an important role. In this phase, teachers introduce necessary language points and intrigue learners’ imagination but not to teach the target language structures and to let children learn and discover the language on their own. In this process they need to get the feeling of success. Teachers should show visuals related to the vocabulary in the song and ask them to predict the content. Furthermore, children must not be bored while listening to the song, so they need to have a specific task to do. These are while-listening activities where learners process the information learned in the introductory part of the lesson. Finally, they need to use this information and also increase the educational value of the song. In this post-listening stage, the focus is normally on developing the skills. The children can learn the text step by step. Longer texts can be learned

verse by verse in the following lessons until the children can say the whole rhyme in chorus, in groups, or alone.

METHODOLOGY

The Scope of the Study

This study is limited to investigate EFL teachers’ attitudes towards integrating Songs and music into classroom to develop students’ language achievement. Thus, this paper is confined to basic school teachers of English at five English medium schools in Omdurman, in the school year 2019-2020.

Study participants

The participants in the study are 25 EFL teachers (males and females) who are drawn exclusively from (6) private English medium schools in Sudan, namely: British Educational School, Omdurman English Medium School, Macmillan International School, Cambridge International School, Omdur International School, and Kibeda International School). Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Their teaching experiences varies from three to twenty-five years, Arabic is their mother tongue and English is their foreign language.

Study Tool

The researcher designs a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two axes; the first axis comprised 8 items that focus on teachers’ perceptions towards using Songs in classroom to develop students’ language achievement to which the participants responded on a five-point scale (from strongly agree to strong disagree),

while the second axis comprised of 4 items that focus on teachers' frequent use of songs in their classroom to develop students' language achievement to which the subjects responded on a four-point scale (from **every day to never**).

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the instrument was shown to a panel of three university professors and two English teachers in English medium schools. The final form of the instrument was drawn out after taking their comments, opinions and advices into consideration. Alpha-Cronbach reliability was computed for the questionnaire which revealed that the tool is stable ($\alpha = 0.87$ and $\alpha = 0.95$ respectively). This revealed the proposition test and the questionnaire are reliable tool to measure the construct consistently.

Data analysis

The results obtained from the participants were analyzed using an SPSS 11 package/programmer. Each

participant was given a participation number and the data were entered accordingly using descriptive analytical method. Later, the frequencies and percentages for each question were presented in tables.

RESULTS

After the step of checking questionnaire's validity and reliability, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the study sample of (30) teachers of English. Then the results of the data analysis have been readily presented in form of figures, tables and graphs. The results obtained from the analysis are divided into two parts. The first parts sheds light on teachers' attitudes towards using music and songs in teaching English for young learners and the second focuses on teachers' frequent use of songs in their classroom to develop students' language achievement

Research Question One: What are Sudanese EFL teachers' attitudes toward using music and songs in EFL classroom?

Teachers' attitudes toward using songs in teaching English to young learners

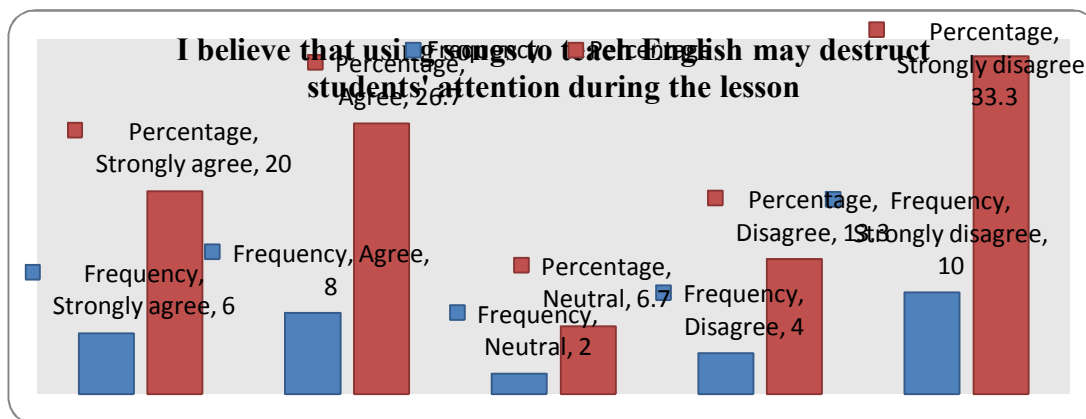


Figure (1) First statement

The above figure No (1) shows that there are (6) respondents in the study's sample with (20%) strongly agreed with the statement *"I believe that using songs to teach English may destruct students' attention during the lesson."* There are (8) respondents with (26.7%) agreed with that, and (2) respondents with (6.7%) were neutral, and (4) respondents with (13.3%) disagreed, and (10) respondents with (33.3%) strongly disagreed.

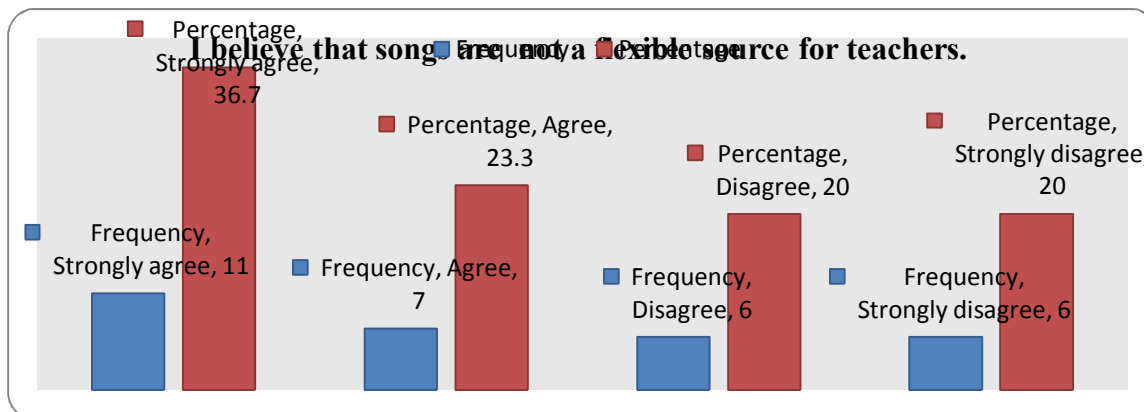


Figure (2): second statement

Results of the second statement indicate that the great majority of EFL teachers, 60% "believe that songs are not a flexible resource for teachers." 9.6% stated that they were disagreed, and 3.8% strongly disagreed with statement two.

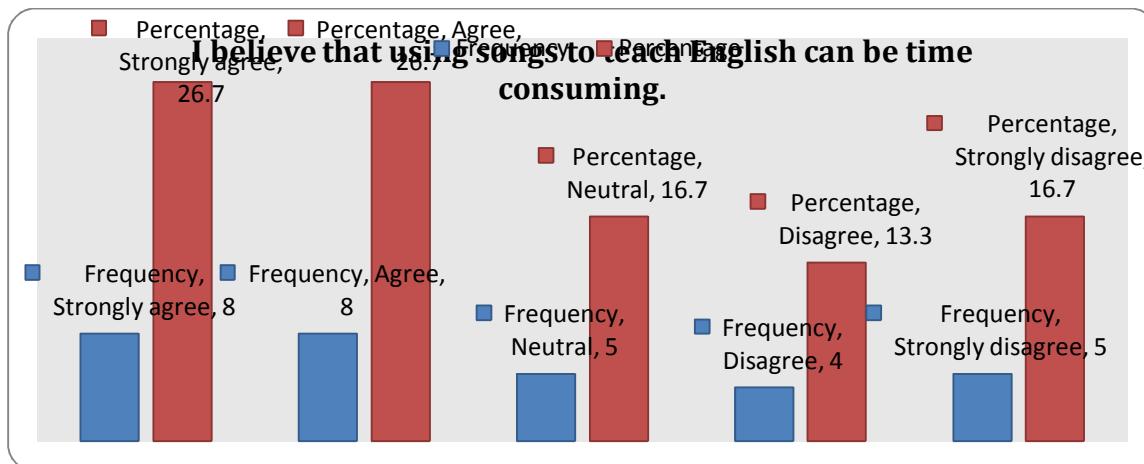


Figure (3): eighth statement

The results for statement 3 indicate that the majority of the respondents believe that using songs to teach English is time consuming. The figure No (8) shows that (53.4%) of the

respondents agreed with the statement, (16.7%) stated that they were neutral, and (30%) disagreed with statement (3).

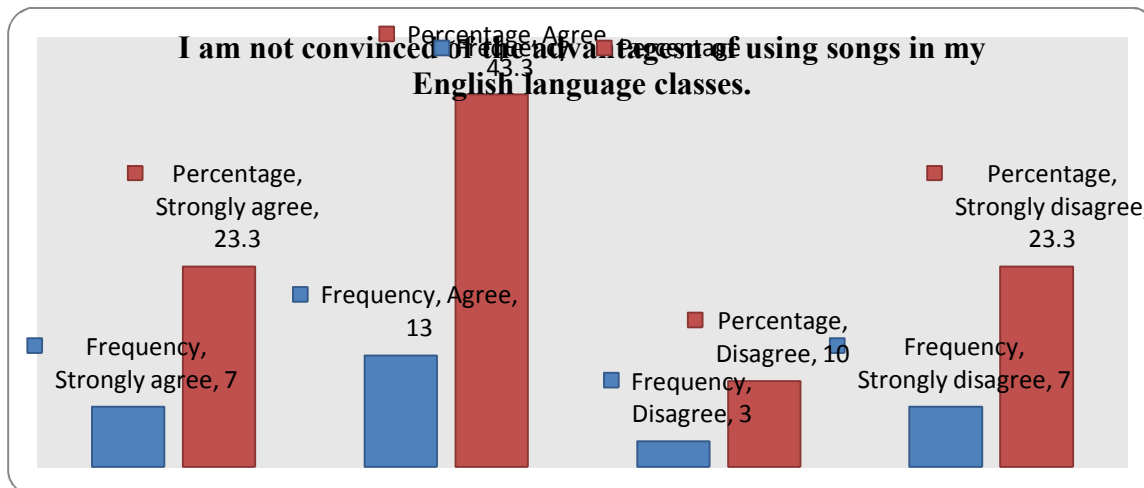


Figure (4): seventh statement

According to the figure (4) the majority of participants endorse the statement “I am not convinced of the advantages of using songs in my English language classes.” There are (7) participants in the study's sample with (23.3%) strongly agreed with the statement and (13) participants with (43.3%) agreed. There are (3) participants with (10%) disagreed, and (7) participants with (23.3%) strongly disagreed.

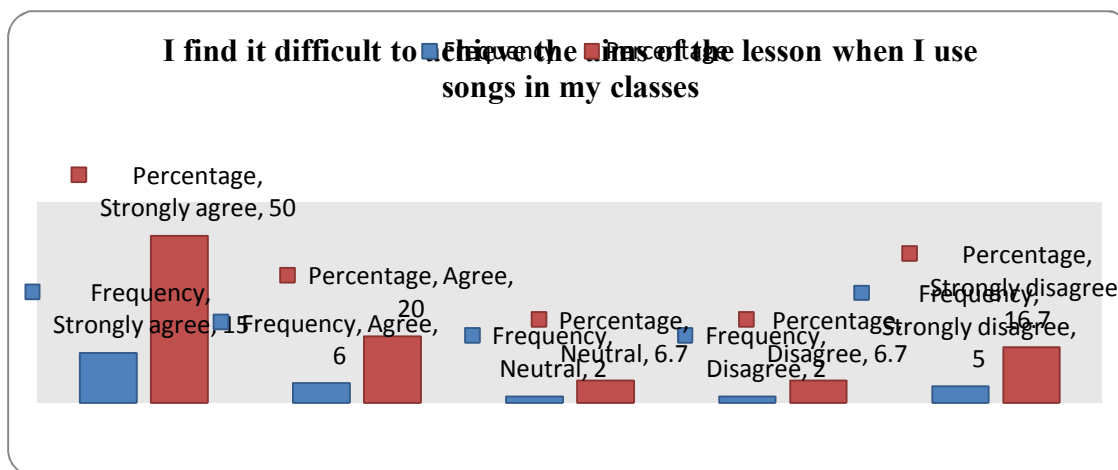


Figure (5): third statement

Results of the third statement show that the great majority of the teachers, 70% find it difficult to achieve the aims of the lesson when I use songs in my classes. 6.7% stated that they were neutral, and 6.7% agreed with statement and 16.7% strongly disagreed.

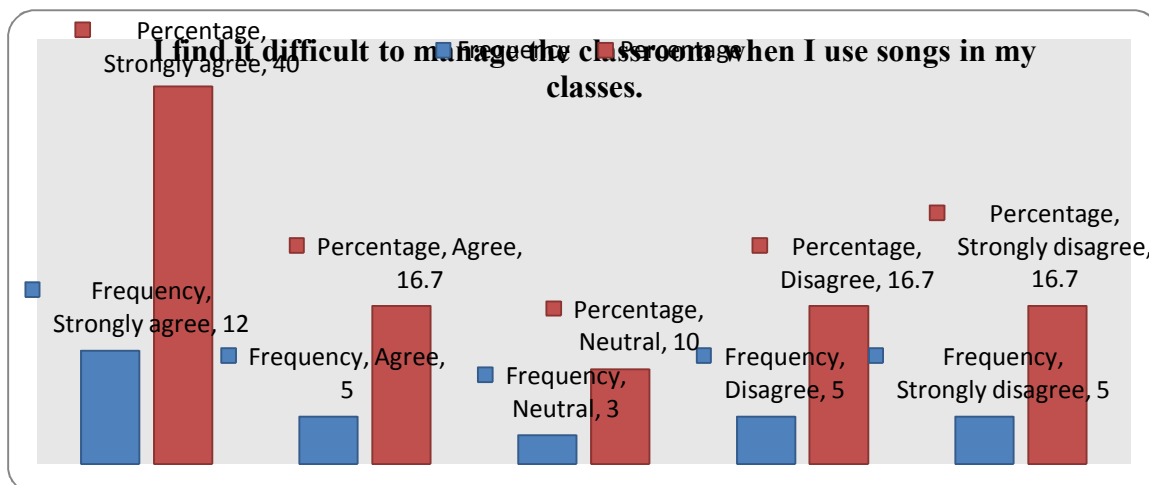


Figure (6): fourth statement

According to the figure No (6) respondents endorse the statement “I find it difficult to manage the classroom when I use songs in my classes.” There are (12) respondents in the study's sample with (40%) strongly agreed with the statement and (5) respondents with (16.7%) agreed. There were (3) respondents with (10%) were neutral, (5) respondents with (16.7%) disagreed, and (5) respondents with (16.7%) strongly disagreed.

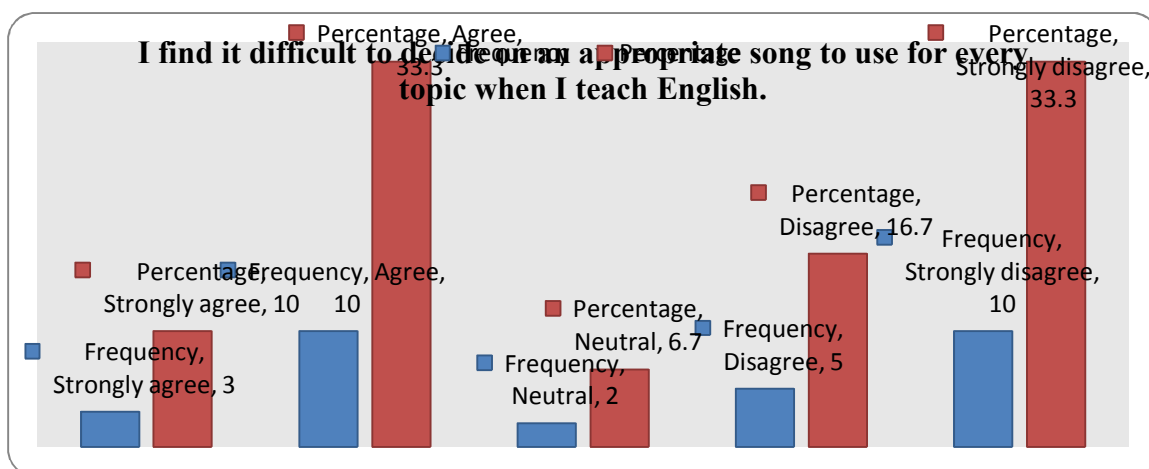


Figure (7): fifth statement

According to figure (7) the majority of the respondents endorse “I find it difficult to decide on an appropriate song to use for every topic when I teach English.” (50%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, (6.7%) stated that they were neutral, and (43.3%) disagreed with statement (7).

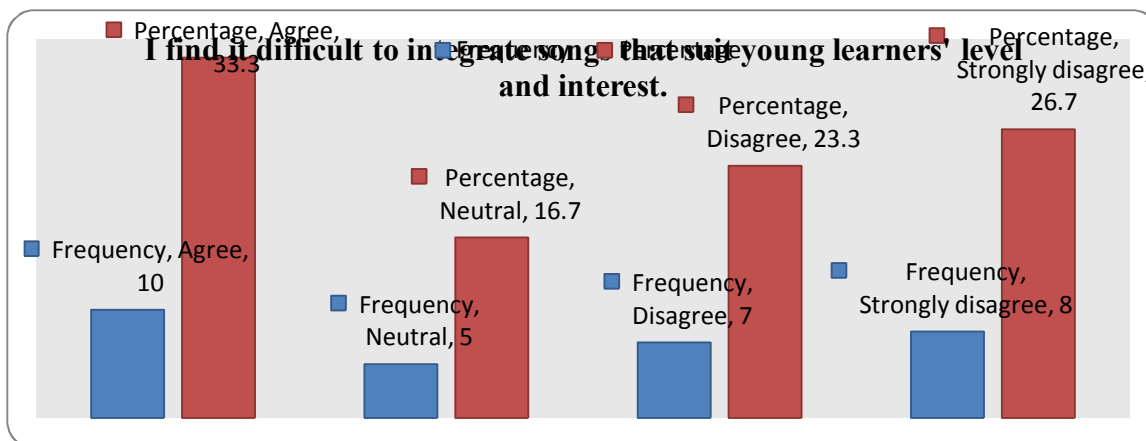


Figure (8): sixth statement

Finally, according to the above figure No (8) respondents rejected the statement “I find it difficult to integrate songs that suit young learners' mastery of the language.” The majority of respondents, 50% disagreed with the statement 6, (16.7%) stated that they were neutral, and (33.3%) agreed with the statement 8.

Descriptive statistics

For example, mean (average), mode (the most frequent value) and standard deviation give a hint on the most frequent respond. They also give a clue on whether the participants agree or disagree with the statements in general.

| No | Statements | Mean | Mode | SD |
|----|--|--------|---------|---------|
| 1 | I believe that using songs to teach English may destruct students' attention during the lesson. | 2.8667 | 1.00 | 1.61316 |
| 2 | I believe that songs are not a flexible resource for teachers | 3.3667 | 5.00 | 1.62912 |
| 3 | I believe that using songs to teach English can be time consuming | 3.8000 | 5.00 | 1.54026 |
| 4 | I am not convinced of the advantages of using songs in my English language classes | 3.4667 | 5.00 | 1.56983 |
| 5 | I find it difficult to achieve the aims of the lesson when I use songs in my classes. | 2.7000 | 1.00(a) | 1.48904 |
| 6 | I find it difficult to manage the classroom when I use songs in my classes. | 2.5667 | 4.00 | 1.22287 |
| 7 | I find it difficult to decide on an appropriate song to use for every topic when I teach English | 3.3333 | 4.00 | 1.53877 |
| 8 | I find it difficult to integrate songs that suit young learners' level and interest. | 3.3333 | 4.00(a) | 1.44636 |

As it can be noticed from the above table the mean (average) values are (2.8667, 3.3667, 3.8000, 3.4667, 2.7000, 2.5667, 3.3333, 3.333) which indicates the variations in the participants' responses between neutral and agree.

Chi-square analysis test:

This type of analysis shows how significantly the participants agree with

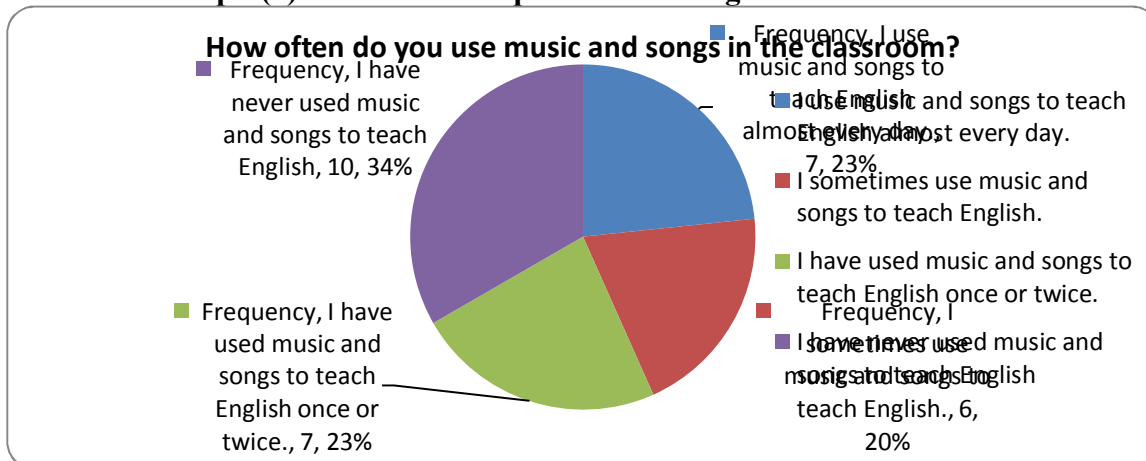
the each hypothesis through its statements. In other words, the chi-square investigates the acceptance of the hypotheses statistically under (0.05) error significance. It sums up the previous two analyses and concludes to a final decision.

| No . | Statements | Chi-Square(a,b) | df | P-value | Decision |
|------|--|-----------------|----|---------|----------------------------|
| 1 | I believe that using songs to teach English may destruct students' attention during the lesson. | 6.667 | 4 | .155 | Not significantly accepted |
| 2 | I believe that songs are not a flexible resource for teachers | 2.267 | 3 | .519 | Not significantly accepted |
| 3 | I believe that using songs to teach English can be time consuming | 19.000 | 4 | .001 | Accepted |
| 4 | I am not convinced of the advantages of using songs in my English language classes. | 8.000 | 4 | .052 | Accepted |
| 5 | I find it difficult to achieve the aims of the lesson when I use songs in my classes. | 9.667 | 4 | .046 | Accepted |
| 6 | I find it difficult to manage the classroom when I use songs in my classes. | 1.733 | 3 | .630 | Not significantly accepted |
| 7 | I find it difficult to decide on an appropriate song to use for every topic when I teach English | 6.800 | 3 | .049 | Accepted |
| 8 | I find it difficult to integrate songs that suit young learners' level and interest. | 2.333 | 4 | .675 | Not significantly accepted |

The result of the chi-square analysis shows participants significantly accepted the statements (3,4,5,7) while their opinions of the statements (1,2,6,8) vary slightly. Every value of (p-value) that is close to (0.05) is considered significantly accepted by the participants. It is noticed that p-values for the statements (3,4,5,7) are nearly equal to the standard significance value (0.05) while the p-values of the statements (1,2,6,8) are greater than (0.05).

Research Question Two: How often do Sudanese EFL teachers use music and songs in their classroom?

Graph (1): Teachers' Frequent use of songs in EFL classroom



The above graph shows detailed distribution on the teachers' frequent use of music and songs in the classroom. As it can be seen, (34%) of EFL teachers have never used music and songs to teach English, (23%) have used music and songs once or twice in their classrooms, (20%) of them sometimes use music and songs, while (23%) of the of EFL teachers use music and songs almost every day in their classroom.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question one revealed that most of Sudanese EFL primary teachers resist using songs in the classroom for many reasons. The findings of this study is in agreement with the findings of Savik (2011) who conducted a study to explore the views of Turkish state primary school EFL teachers about using songs in teaching English to young learners. He examined and analyzed the results demonstrated that teachers had difficulty in accessing appropriate songs to use in their classes and in measuring student

success when they use songs. Therefore, there is a need for a structured and systematical approach regarding songs. Moreover, Almutairi (2016) in her study found that most of the Saudi EFL teachers surveyed realize the pedagogical value of using songs when teaching English to Young Learner however; they do not use songs because of their religious and cultural beliefs. Brewster, Ellis and Girard (1992: 174) consider music and songs as common language learning activities which should frequently form an integral part of language programs and publish ELT materials for children." However, research question two revealed that the majority of EFL teachers never use music and song more frequently in their English lessons. This finding contradict the findings of Almutairi (2016), and Savik (2011) who found that the majority of the teachers state that they use songs as much possible and that they have easy access to songs.

CONCLUSION

Although keeping young learners engaging can be challenging, using music and songs as a teaching tool is a way to bring the class together and inspire interest in the lesson. Reviewing the relevant literature about using music and songs in the English classroom, it can be clear that music and songs benefit learners in many areas, including linguistic development, exposure to culture and diversity, and experience with multiple ways of human expression and communication, (Mobbs & Cuyul 2018). This study made an attempt to examine EFL teachers' attitudes towards using music and songs in teaching English to young learners. The results showed that the majority of teachers believe that using songs to teach English can be time consuming find it difficult to achieve the aims of the lesson when using songs and find it difficult to manage the classroom when using songs. The results indicated that the majority of EFL teachers have never used music and songs to teach English. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that Sudanese EFL teachers in basic schools have negative attitudes towards using songs when teaching English language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Curriculum and course designers should provide English curricula with different songs that suit different language skills and themes.
2. They should conduct training courses that convince EFL teachers of the advantages of using songs in English language classes and provide them with different techniques

for adapting and exploiting music and songs for the language classroom. Finally, they should motivate teachers to improve their competences especially in using music and songs.

3. The English teachers should be aware of different approaches of language teaching. They should be creative in their classes and create suitable environment for students by adopting up to date techniques i.e. songs that suit students' level, interest, enjoy and motivate them to participate and interact with different activities.

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