

**The Effect of Using Songs on Young Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning: A Case of Gender**

**Ali Roohani \***

*Associate Professor, Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran*

**Somayeh Akbarpour**

*MA Student of TEFL, Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran*

**Abstract**

Knowledge can be reflected in vocabulary repertoire; it is thus important to find out effective methods of vocabulary teaching which can assist language learners in the process of vocabulary learning. This study investigated the effectiveness of teaching English vocabulary through song and non-song methods to elementary Iranian EFL learners. Additionally, it examined the role of EFL learners' gender in their success in English vocabulary learning. To these ends, 100 EFL learners, aged 9-12, were selected and were randomly assigned into two experimental (song) and two control (non-song) groups, each with 25 male and 25 female EFL participants. The experimental and control groups had song and non-song instructions, respectively, for English vocabulary learning. To collect data, a 40-item vocabulary test was developed and administered as the pretest and posttest. Results from analysis of covariance revealed that both song and non-song instructions had a statistically significant and positive effect on the EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Furthermore, the female learners benefited more from the song method whereas the males benefited more from the non-song method of instruction. The findings imply that using songs should not be taken a panacea for both male and female EFL learners; rather, it should serve as a supplementary method to teaching vocabulary, particularly to young female learners in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** song and non-song instruction, gender, vocabulary learning

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\* Associate Professor, Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran

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Email: *roohani.ali@gmail.com*.

## 1. Introduction

The process of learning a second/foreign language (L2) is undoubtedly a complex one, involving a dynamic interplay of language skills and components (Roohani & Khalilan, 2012). And vocabulary is one of the important L2 components without which neither language comprehension nor production is possible (Abdollahzadeh & Amiri-Vardani, 2010). Learners should have a high degree of vocabulary coverage to gain profound knowledge in L2 (Schmitt, 2008). Also, vocabulary knowledge is a good, if not the best, predictor of skills such as reading (Qian, 2002). However, this aspect of language learning was often disregarded in the past (Prince, 1996), and was often treated as the “Cinderella of foreign language learning” (Beheydt, 1987, p. 55). Moreover, vocabulary teaching has never received the same degree of attention as have the other aspects such as grammar (Hedge, 2008; Richards & Renandya, 2002). As Folse (2004) points out, this is a myth that “vocabulary is sufficiently covered enough in our curricula and courses” (p. 1).

Furthermore, this important aspect of L2 learning has suffered from the scarcity of effective methods of vocabulary instruction in most L2 curricula (Folse, 2004). The necessity of more effective and innovative vocabulary practice seems to be fundamental for English as foreign language (EFL) learners and teachers. According to Alibeigynejad and Fahimniya (2015), the major concern of EFL teachers should be about increasing the repertoire of lexical items through employing various strategies in L2. However, as Thornbury (2002) points out, L2 vocabulary learning is not much welcomed by many students due to the fact that they have problems not only in memorizing the meaning, pronunciation, and spelling of target (English) words but also in recalling and remembering them. Thus, it is necessary to improve the method of teaching vocabulary and make **vocabulary learning** more enjoyable.

One of the possible methods that may promote students’ interests and motivations in learning L2 vocabulary is using songs/music. “Songs are ubiquitous” (Schön et al., 2007, p. 2) and have important functions. The most popular function of songs is their affective attractions (Trainor, Austin, & Desjardins, 2000). Apart from the emotional appeal of songs, other cognitive and linguistic functions have also been identified in favor of their use (Schoepp, 2001). As a viable teaching tool, songs can promote L2 acquisition/learning in young learners (Medina, 1993); empirical studies (e.g., Ayotte, 2004; Fischler, 2006; Neumam, 2004; Ransdell & Gilroy, 2001; Schön, Magne, & Besson, 2004) also provided support for the beneficial effects of using songs on some aspects of language learning. Given that L2 vocabulary occupies a place in the broad zone of linguistic knowledge and in light of the significance of using songs for young language learners, the present study investigated the comparative effectiveness of using song and

non-song methods in improving young Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Additionally, it examined gender differences in using song and non-song methods of English vocabulary learning. Undoubtedly, "factors affecting vocabulary learning is very complicated" (Lin-Fang, 2013, p. 202). As Nyikos and Fan (2007) state, L2 vocabulary learning may be influenced by factors such as learners' individual variation and gender, strategy development, language proficiency, and learning environment. Among these variables, studies of gender differences in the area of L2 vocabulary learning seem to be insufficient (Pourshahian, Yousefi, & Rezvani, 2012). In fact, carrying out research on gender variable can help L2 teachers and educators develop appropriate materials and activities for their male and female L2 learners who intend to promote their vocabulary repertoire.

## 2. Literature Review

The theoretical justification for the use of songs in L2 learning comes from theories such as Krashen's (1982) L2 hypotheses, particularly input and affective filter hypotheses, and Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences (MI). According to Krashen's (1989) input hypothesis, new and unfamiliar vocabulary is acquired when its meaning is made clear to learners. Meaning gives rise to comprehensible input, leading to better learning and retaining L2 vocabulary. Meaning can be demonstrated with the aids of extra linguistic input (Krashen, 1989). As Medina (2002) states, "story songs" i.e., stories which have been set to music, can be used in L2 classrooms to supply comprehensible input for acquiring vocabulary and accelerate learners' progression from stage  $i$  to stage  $i+1$ . In short, as Allen (1999) states, "songs help us move away from decontextualized single definitions and towards a concept-based multilayered knowledge of words" (p. 4).

Several researchers (e.g., Anton, 1990; Ayotte, 2004; Hsu, 2009; Wilcox, 1995) claim that the affective filter hypothesis is best known for the research focusing on songs for teaching purposes. According to them, songs may assist learners in lowering their high levels of stress and increase their motivation. In addition, songs can be a great source of making optimal attitude and positive atmosphere in the classroom, enhancing the use of the linguistic input from environment. The melodious music and patterned lyrics in songs may be able to create a happy and low pressure environment which helps lower the affective filter and bring about better language acquisition (Butzlaff, 2000; Johnson & Memmott, 2006; Shen, 2009).

The use of songs in L2 classrooms finds support from the theory of Gardner's (1983, 1999) multiple intelligences (MI). According to MI theory, language learners have different types of intelligences (linguistic, logical, spatial, bodily, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and the existential intelligences) in varying degrees. As Hashemian and Adibpour

(2012) point out, the teaching plays a significant role in developing, nurturing, and optimizing L2 learners' MI profiles. Based on Medina (2002), applying songs is a useful tool for L2 learning and cultivating musical intelligence. Moreover, Murphey (1990) claims that songs are an important tool for activating the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). He states that there is a relation between song-stuck-in-my-head (SSIMH) phenomenon and Krashen's Din (the involuntary rehearsal of a foreign language in one's mind); songs can facilitate the stimulation of the LAD into the Din mode of involuntary language rehearsal (Murphey, 1992).

In a quasi-experimental study, Hashim and Abd-Rahman (2010) examined the use of songs on teaching subject-verb agreement (SVA) among 35 fifth-grade students in Malaysia. The experimental group was taught the grammar through songs for three sessions while the control group was taught without song-based tasks. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis showed that using songs was a helpful vehicle to reinforce the learning of SVA. Also, in a study on the effects of music upon the acquisition of L2 vocabulary, Medina (1990) conducted a study on four groups of 20 Spanish children: the no-music group (who listened to a story), the music group (who listened to the same story in its song version), the illustration group (who listened to the story using illustrations), and the no-illustration group (who listened to the story spoken without pictures). Comparing the performance of the four groups revealed no significant difference between the four groups, but vocabulary gain scores for the music group were higher than those of no music group. She concluded that song stories could be among the most common sources of incidental vocabulary learning for young children. However, some researchers such as Winter (2010), who investigated the relationship between using songs and productive vocabulary performances of second-grade English language learners in an elementary school in the US, concluded that the use of song neither improved significantly nor markedly hindered vocabulary learning.

Furthermore, gender-based differences may have an influence on L2 learners' choice of language learning strategies, in general (Oxford, 2002) and vocabulary learning strategy, in particular (Klein, 2007). This difference between males and females might also result from "the different structures of the male and female brain and hormones secreted" (Uster, 2008, p. 73). Brizendine (2007) states that the hippocampus, which is the center of memory, is larger in female brain and it is fed by female hormone estrogen, so verbal memory of females is more active and their vocabulary retention is superior. Thereby, using songs may work better for female language learners. According to Sylwester (1995), women seem to process information faster than men because the corpus callosum, which is responsible for the transfer of information between the two brain hemispheres, is larger in women's brain. Research also indicates that vocabulary learning may be affected by various factors such as gender and proficiency level. For example, Goh and Foong's

(1997) study revealed that female students used guessing unknown words and making up new words more than males. Using songs might build a generally positive atmosphere in the class and lower the anxiety level among female students.

Although there are many studies regarding difference in vocabulary size or vocabulary strategy used by males and females (e.g., Llach & Gallego, 2012), quite a few studies (e.g., Alipour, Gorjian, & Zafari, 2012) have compared the performances of male and female language learners' vocabulary learning using a song method. Also, to the researchers' best knowledge, there is little research investigating whether the use of songs could impact EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Moreover, most of the aforementioned studies (e.g., Mori, 2011) have predominantly focused on adults or college level students; less attention has been paid to finding ways to enhance young EFL learners' vocabulary learning at school. This study was designed to fill out part of the gap. In light of the above issues, this study sought to address the following research questions:

1. Is using songs more effective than the traditional method (i.e., non-song method) in teaching English vocabulary to young Iranian EFL learners?
2. Does EFL learners' gender make any significant difference in using song and non-song methods to improve their English vocabulary learning?

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Participants*

The main participants in this study were 100 Iranian EFL learners. The participants in four intact classes were at elementary level and constituted four groups: two experimental classes (one with 25 female and one with 25 male EFL learners) from Sokhansara Language Institute, and two control classes (one with 25 female and one with 25 male EFL learners) from Avaye Mehrvarzan Language Institute in Isfahan. The participants, within the age range of 9-12, were selected from the aforementioned institutes where they could be accessed by the present researchers. Having learned English alphabets and practiced reading and writing easy English vocabulary, the participants were placed at the elementary level by the institutes. Meanwhile, 100 EFL learners who were similar to the main participants in terms of age and language level participated in the pilot phase of validating the vocabulary test used in the present study.

#### *3.2 Instruments*

To collect data, this study used a vocabulary test as the pretest and posttest. The test, developed by the present researchers, contained 40 items, including

fill in the space, multiple-choice, matching, and true/false item types (see Appendix A). The score for the test could range from 0 to 40. The target words were selected from a list of words the participants did not know. To validate the test, this study used evidence from content validity, and structural equation modeling (SEM). The content validity of the test was specified through the development and use of a detailed item specification as the blueprint and experts' judgments. Also, the test content corresponded to the syllabuses of the EFL children book series used in the above-mentioned institutes i.e., *Hip Hip Hooray* (Eisele, Eisele, Hanlon, Hanlon, & Hojel, 2004) and *English Times* (Rivers & Toyama, 2008).

The vocabulary test, which was administered to 100 low-intermediate level EFL learners within the age of 9-12, was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in a pilot study using AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) software. AMOS could assess and present model in an intuitive path diagram to show hypothesized relationships among variables (Arbuckle, 2007). The results of CFA revealed that one factor model was fitted to the vocabulary test instrument (see Figure B in Appendix B). Furthermore, as the fit measure results (see Table B in Appendix B) displayed, the value of RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation used for declaring level of significance) was .000 ( $p \leq .05$ ). Also, a Cmin:df value of .96 was close to 1.00, indicating a very good fit. Meanwhile, Cmin (Chi-square minimum) was checked to indicate minimum value of the discrepancy between the model and the data. Furthermore, the internal consistency reliability of the test was measured through coefficient alpha (0.70).

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

This research adopted a quasi-experimental design with four intact classes. First, some words were selected from three textbooks i.e., *Song Time Starter*, *Song Time 2* (Shahsavari & Yeganeh, 2010), and *Song Time 1* (Holisaz & Yeganeh, 2010). Second, given the lack of a valid test for purpose of the present study, a vocabulary test was developed with the focus on the target words selected from the textbooks. Care was taken to include item formats which would suit their level of language and cognition (see Appendix A). Third, the test was piloted and validated on 100 EFL young learners, similar to the participants in the main study; both content and construct validity were both checked. Fourth, the participants in four classes (two classes included male EFL learners and two classes included female EFL learners) were randomly assigned as the experimental (song) and control (non-song) groups. The validated test was administered as the pretest to them to assess their vocabulary knowledge before having the instructions of the study. Fifth, instructions were given to both experimental and control groups for about a month to teach new words, some of which were included in the vocabulary test.

As to the materials in the experimental groups, ten authentic songs were used. They included “Colors and Shapes”, “Head and Shoulders”, and “Teddy Bear” from *Song Time Starter* (Shahsavari & Yeganeh, 2010). “Ali Baba’s Farm”, “This Is the Way”, and “Family” from *Song Time 2* (Shahsavari & Yeganeh, 2010). “Feelings”, “Fruits”, “Uncle Paul”, and “Goodbye” from *Song Time 1* (Holisaz & Yeganeh, 2010). These songs included vocabulary at the appropriate level for the participants. Meanwhile, *Song Time* is a six-level series of songs for EFL children. Its material corresponded to the syllabuses of the EFL children book series (*Hip Hip Hooray* and *English Time*) used in the above-mentioned institutes. Each level of *Song Time* series includes student book, teacher’s edition, video CD, audio CD, test pack, Power Point presentation, and flash cards.

In the experimental group, which consists of two classes, the following steps were taken:

- The participants listened to each song twice, allowing them to become familiar with it;
- The participants listened to the song again. In this stage, the meaning of new words was demonstrated through visual aids (the pictures).
- The participants were asked to repeat after listening to the audio.
- The participants were asked to repeat chunk by chunk what the teacher said (echo reading technique).
- The participants were asked to sing the complete song along with the recording.
- The participants were asked to look at their texts and read aloud the lyrics together to get acquainted with the words (unison or choral technique).
- The participants were asked to listen to the song at home, memorize it, and do the exercises related to the vocabulary of song for the following session.
- The teacher checked their understanding of new words by checking the performances on the exercise in the textbooks.

In the control group, which consisted of two classes, the same words were presented; however, the way of presenting the vocabulary was different. The control group was given vocabulary instruction using a traditional method (without having any song context) for teaching new vocabulary to young EFL learners. First, the teacher showed the flashcard or picture of a word with the written word below the picture. Second, she pronounced the word clearly and loudly. Third, the teacher established the meaning by miming or telling a simple story. Fourth, she asked the participants to repeat the word. Fifth, the teacher checked if the students understood the meaning of the word by asking them questions.

Care was taken to present 10 new words in both experimental and control groups in about 30 minutes each session. It took about six weeks to instruct the target words in each group. □

After the instructions, the English vocabulary test was administered as the posttest to both control and experimental groups to assess their English vocabulary gains. Finally, data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using SPSS (version 21) and tests of statistical significance were run to address the research questions of the study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 Results

To find out about the performance of the participants on the vocabulary test in both control (non-song) and experimental (song) groups, descriptive statistics of pretest and posttest vocabulary scores for the male and female EFL participants in both groups were obtained and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of the Vocabulary Scores for Both Genders in Both Groups*

Group	Variable	Gender	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev.
Non-Song	Pretest	Male	25	2	26	10.04	6.17
		Female	25	2	23	10.72	6.05
		Total	50	2	26	10.38	6.06
	Posttest	Male	25	15	37	25	6.58
		Female	25	9	33	21	7.61
		Total	50	9	37	23	7.32
Song	Pretest	Male	25	2	18	9.92	4.11
		Female	25	0	25	10.60	6.31
		Total	50	0	25	10.26	5.28
	Posttest	Male	25	10	37	19.92	6.48
		Female	25	12	37	26.76	6.02
		Total	50	10	37	23.34	7.09

As Table 1 demonstrates, the minimum and maximum pretest score differences between the song and non-song groups were not so great, indicating few outliers to violate the normality of vocabulary scores. Also, the pretest vocabulary mean score in the non-song (10.38) and the song (10.26) groups did not differ so greatly, further supporting the homogeneity of the pretest vocabulary scores. Similarly, the mean difference of the posttest vocabulary scores between the non-song (23.00) and the song (23.34) groups

was small (less than unity). However, the mean vocabulary scores in both groups showed a marked increase from the pretests to the posttests.

As to the gender, as Table 1 shows, the pretest vocabulary mean score difference between the song (10.60) and non-song (10.72) groups for the female participants was not great, but the posttest vocabulary mean score for the females in the song (26.76) and non-song (21) groups demonstrated bigger differences, with the females in the song group having a better performance on the vocabulary. Unlike the data for the females, the posttest mean score for the male students in the non-song group (25) was larger than that of the song group (19.92), indicating better performance of the male participants in the non-song group. Moreover, the data in Table 1 show that both female and male participants' vocabulary mean scores increased from the pretest to the posttest despite the fact that the degree of increase varied for the female and male participants.

The first research question intended to find out whether using songs was more effective than the non-song method in teaching L2 vocabulary. To address the first research question of the study, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for the treatment effect was conducted after checking several assumptions. To make sure that English vocabulary scores had similar variances across both groups, the Levene's test of equality of variance was carried out. The results showed that the variance was equal and there was no significant difference between both groups in terms of vocabulary scores ( $p = 1.669$ ; see Appendix C, Table C1). Moreover, ANCOVA "requires that the relationship between the covariate and dependent variable for each of the groups is the same" (Pallent, 2007, p. 293). Thus, in order to meet this assumption, a preliminary ANCOVA was conducted to ensure that there was no significant interaction between the treatment variable and the pretest vocabulary scores (see Appendix C, Table C2). The results showed that the treatment for the pretest scores was not statistically significant,  $F = .935$  ( $p = .336$ ), giving assurance to run ANCOVA for the treatment effect (the effect of instructions) on the posttest vocabulary scores. The results of ANCOVA for the treatment effect on the posttest vocabulary scores are reported in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Analysis of Covariance for the Treatment Effect on the Posttest Scores*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1821.15	2	910.57	26.94	.000	.357
Intercept	5406.15	1	5406.15	159.93	.000	.622
Pretest	1818.26	1	1818.26	53.79	.000	.357
Group (treatment)	4.64	1	4.64	.137	.712	.001
Error	3278.96	97	33.80			

Total	58785	100
Corrected Total	5100.11	99

As Table 3 reveals, the treatments of the study had no significant differential effect on the students' posttest vocabulary scores,  $F = .137$ ,  $p = .712$ . In other words, the difference between the two types of instructions (song vs non-song) was not statistically significant. The corresponding effect size was also estimated to be .001, which was very small. Estimated marginal means i.e., the adjusted means on the dependent variable for each of the groups, indicated that the song group ( $M = 23.385$ ) performed better than the non-song group ( $M = 22.955$ ) on the posttests (see Table 4), but the difference was very small, hence statistically insignificant. In sum, using songs was not more effective than the non-song method in teaching English vocabulary to the EFL learners.

Table 3  
*Estimate Margin Means for Both Groups*

Group	Mean	Std. Error	99% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1a	23.38	.822	21.75	25.02
2b	22.95	.822	21.32	24.59

<sup>a</sup> Group 1= Song Group; <sup>b</sup> Group 2 = Non-Song Group

To address the second research question of the study, which concerned the effect of gender on the vocabulary performance in using the two methods, a two-way test of covariate analysis was conducted after checking the assumption of normality of the vocabulary scores and lack of any significant interaction between the pretest vocabulary scores and gender variable (see Appendix C, Tables C3 and C4). The results of two-way ANCOVA are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Analysis of Covariance for the Treatment Effect on the Posttest Vocabulary Scores*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2576.11	4	644.03	24.24	.000	.505
Intercept	5426.31	1	5426.31	204.24	.000	.683
Pretest	1788.40	1	1788.40	67.31	.000	.415
Treatment	4.63	1	4.63	.174	.677	.002
Gender	20.55	1	20.55	.773	.381	.008
Treatment * Gender	734.41	1	734.41	27.65	.000	.225
Error	2524	95	26.57			

Total	58785	100
Corrected Total	5100.11	99

According to the results, the interaction between effects of the treatment and gender variable was significant,  $F = 27.65$  \* $p < .05$ ; this significant interaction supported the idea that the males and females responded differently to the type of instruction in the study. Besides, the partial eta squared, indicating the effect size of the treatment, was found to be about .22 (a medium size), indicating that 22% of the variance in the dependent variable (posttest vocabulary scores) was explained by the independent variable (treatment). Thus, the gender variable had an effect on the participants' vocabulary performance.

As the estimated marginal means in Table 5 demonstrate, the female participants in the song group ( $M = 26.54$ ) performed better than the female participants in the non-song group ( $M = 20.69$ ) on the vocabulary posttests, but the males in the non-song group ( $M = 25.21$ ) performed better than the males in the song group ( $M = 20.22$ ) on the vocabulary posttests. In sum, gender had a differential effect on the vocabulary performance of the participants in the experimental groups.

Table 5  
*Estimate Margin Means for Both Groups*

Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	99% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Song	Male	20.22	1.032	18.17	22.27
	Female	26.55	1.031	24.50	28.60
Non-Song	Male	25.21	1.031	23.16	27.26
	Female	20.70	1.032	18.65	22.75

#### 4.2 Discussion

The first research question focused on the effectiveness of using songs on English vocabulary learning. The song group obtained a higher mean score than the non-song group on the posttest. However, the test of significance revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups in vocabulary gains at the posttest stage. This result indicates that song method, compared with the non-song method, was not more effective in improving the participants' vocabulary learning. Several plausible reasons may explain why no significant differences were observed. First, it may be related to the length of the instruction, which lasted for less than two months (for 30 minutes a session). It might be insufficient for the EFL young beginners to learn English vocabulary. If the instruction time was longer, the learners might have been able to improve their word knowledge in English. As Belisle (1997) and Swain

and Lapkin (1991) assert, in order to facilitate the learning and internalization of vocabulary for EFL learners, repeated exposures and manipulation of the vocabulary are needed. Thus, the amount of instruction time and, consequently, inadequate reinforcement of the English vocabulary might have played a role on their performance; hence, the non-significant result on the comparative effectiveness of the song and non-song methods of vocabulary teaching was observed.

The second reason is probably related to the role of song in the Iranian context. Some of the participants might have used songs as an outlet or outburst of energy in the classroom. Perhaps, for some of the participants in the song groups, the act of listening to songs seemed to be a source of entertainment rather than an educational tool for vocabulary learning. Due to some limitations in incorporating English songs in curriculum and lack of trained teachers for this purpose, rarely had they been exposed to such instruction; hence, some of the participants were so engaged with other elements such as rhythm, melody, and harmony that the meanings of target vocabulary in the lyrics were perhaps taken to be secondary to them.

The third reason may be related to rote memorization. As Gfeller (1983) argues, music and song seem to benefit rote memorization when linguistic information and music are presented simultaneously. Likewise, Salcedo (2002) claims that the use of songs in the foreign language classroom mainly helps memory rather than increasing vocabulary learning considerably; that is to say, the rhythmic presentation of meaningful verbal information in songs benefits more memorization (Glazner, 1976). Although using songs was an enjoyable method and improved the young learners' English vocabulary learning to some extent, reciting the whole songs by the participants in the experimental group did not mean that they had learned all the content words in the songs. For instance, most of the participants in the song groups easily recited the "Colors and Shapes" song (addressing color and shape words and concepts), but the test items addressing color and shape concepts on the posttest were missed by many EFL participants in the song group. Possibly color and shape terms can be learned better through a traditional method such as using flash cards and photos. As Murphey (1992) states, no matter how enjoyable or memorable songs are, they fail to teach all individuals to use the language and transfer new words into use. Thus, alternatives such as word games, crossword puzzles, hangman, and vocabulary webs should be considered.

In sum, the results of this study indicate that the use of songs was marginally beneficial perhaps through such factors as bringing fun in language classroom, increasing learners' motivation, and presenting authentic language context, attaching information in auditory memory, decreasing cognitive load in working memory, and engaging both left and right brain. In addition, using songs created a cooperative context in the experimental classes, giving it a

potential to reinforce the effect of the song instruction for EFL learners. Nonetheless, as the results indicate, the song method is not an ideal way for young EFL learners to learn target L2 words more quickly, effectively and easily, as compared with the non-song method, particularly when it is unfamiliar to them. The above finding is confirmed by previous research (e.g., El-Nahhal, 2011; Medina, 1990; Mori, 2011; Winter, 2010), which appreciated the general benefits of song instruction. However, the above result showed that using songs failed to assist learners gain large amount of L2 vocabulary. As Akbari (2008) points out, non-song methods such introducing vocabulary items through pictures can contribute to a high level of vocabulary improvement in elementary Iranian EFL students, too.

The result pertaining to the effect of the learners' gender on English vocabulary learning showed that males and females responded differently to the two types of vocabulary instructions. In other words, the type of instruction had an interaction with the gender variable; the female participants appeared to benefit from the song method of instruction while the males appeared to benefit from the non-song method of instruction. The above result of this study may be related to the male and female learners' intelligence profiles and learning styles. It is possible that "different intelligences that each student possesses result in different learning styles and different needs." And "students of different gender ... have different preferred ways of learning" (Sulaiman, Sulaiman, Bahruddin, & Mohamad, 2013, p. 30). Research (e.g., Furnham, Fong, & Martin, 1999; Rammstedt & Rammsayer, 2000) also shows that the level of logical-mathematical and visual-spatial intelligences is high in males, while level of musical-rhythmic intelligence is high in females.

Musical-rhythmic intelligence is the ability to create, communicate, and understand meanings made out of sound, pitch, melody, rhythm, and tone; visual-spatial intelligence is the ability to think in three-dimensional ways and to perceive, modify, transform, and create visual or spatial images (Gardner, 2004). Given the biological and physiological brain differences, one plausible justification is that the female EFL participants, due to their strength in musical-rhythmic intelligence (Rammstedt & Rammsayer, 2000), possibly learned vocabulary more effectively when they received verbal information and did activities such as singing, choral reading, and listening to audio recording. According to Sulaiman et al. (2013), the focus of such activities is on rhythmic pattern, vocal sound/tone, music composition, and musical performance, in general. However, the male participants, due to their strength in visual-spatial intelligence (Rammstedt & Rammsayer, 2000), possibly learned vocabulary more effectively when they received information through visual aids such as flashcards and pictures from their textbooks. In addition, it is possible that using songs aided the female EFL participants more than the males, to use Krashen's (1989) terms, in lowering their affective filter and

creating low pressure environment; the male EFL participants tended to build up more resistance in singing songs in the classroom, bringing about less effective vocabulary instruction. The aforementioned results gain support from the results of El-Nahha's (2011) study in which female fourth-grade students who listened to songs had better vocabulary performance than male students. Besides, the results are partially consistent with the findings of Jimenez (2003) and Cattell (2000) who found that male learners used more image vocabulary strategies and outperform female learners in certain tasks of vocabulary visual perception. Thus, the effectiveness of L2 vocabulary instruction can be influenced by learner characteristics such as gender.

### **5. Conclusion and Implications**

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that using songs as a method of instruction appears to be marginally beneficial for L2 vocabulary learning, resulting in a better vocabulary performance of L2 learners. But, as Winter (2010) states, "the extent of its value in comparison to more traditional vocabulary instruction is still in question" (p. 71). The length of instruction, time instruction, and context might affect language learners' vocabulary performance. Hence, using songs should not be "a panacea, replacing all other methods as the only viable teaching tool" (Salcedo, 2002, p.127); instead, it should be utilized as an acceptable technique for classroom instruction along with other techniques such as using visual aids. Furthermore, regarding the issue of gender in vocabulary learning, the results revealed that female young EFL learners were more successful in learning vocabulary through using songs than male EFL learners perhaps due to their MI profile and learning styles.

The above results imply that using songs can be served as a supplementary or alternative approach to presenting and teaching foreign language materials such as vocabulary to young learners in EFL classrooms in Iran. It should not be introduced as the most successful and innovative method per se. By implication, the curriculum designers can include songs as an instructional strategy for teaching English vocabulary in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks. However, in designing materials, the gender of participants should not go unnoticed. As the results of this study suggest, the type of materials for each gender should not be necessarily the same; the effectiveness of the methods of teaching L2 vocabulary may depend on learner characteristics. The current investigation is a step and further research is indeed required with a larger sample size and other measurement instruments to make stronger generalizations about the effectiveness of the song method for teaching different types of words.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Vocabulary Test Achievement

Achievement Vocabulary Test Marks: 40

Level: .....

Name: .....

Gender: .....

A) Read the following words and write the number for each picture in the space given below.

شماره هر کدام از لغات را زیر تصویر در فضای مربع داده شده مربوط به آن بنویسید.

- 1) Teddy bear    2) Bowl    3) Knees    4) Fruit    5) Pomegranates  
 6) Angry    7) Circle    8) Jumping    9) Farm    10) Comb



B) Read the following sentences and pay attention to the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence as well as the picture in front of each sentence. Then choose/mark if it is 'True' or 'False'

جملات زیر را بخوانید و به معانی واژگانی که زیر آن خط کشیده شده است و تصاویر در جلوی هر جمله دقت نمایید. سپس درست یا نادرست را انتخاب و علامت زنید.

11) It is a Lamb.True  False 12) He is happy.True  False 13) They are hands.True  False 14) It is a heart.True  False 

15) It is black.

True  False 16) It is a dog.True  False 17) He is old.True  False 18) This is an ear.True  False 19) It is a date.True  False 20) It is a square.True  False 

C) Look at the pictures and circle the correct answers.

به تصاویر زیر نگاه کنید و دور گزینه درست را خط بکشید.

21) This is a .....

a. shoulder

b. nose

c. head

d. hair



- 22) Jack is .....  
 a. short                      b. old                      c. fat                      d. tall
- 23) It is a .....  
 a. head                      b. hand                      c. shoulder                      d. knee
- 24) They are .....  
 a. peaches                      b. dates                      c. oranges                      d. mangoes
- 25) It is a .....  
 a. cat                      b. duck                      c. pig                      d. dog
- 26) They are .....  
 a. arms                      b. eyes                      c. shoulders                      d. toes
- 27) It is a .....  
 a. rectangle                      b. heart                      c. circle                      d. diamond
- 28) It is a .....  
 a. mango                      b. apple                      c. peach                      d. plum
- 29) They are .....  
 a. peaches                      b. plums                      c. apples                      d. grapes
- 30) This is a .....  
 a. rectangle                      b. square                      c. diamond                      d. heart

D) Read the following words and match them with correct and relevant pictures.

کلمات زیر را بخوانید و به تصاویر مربوطه‌ی درست وصل کنید.

- 31) Praying
- 32) Brushing
- 33) Clapping
- 34) Sitting down
- 35) Eating
- 36) Family
- 37) Triangle
- 38) Right
- 39) Upstairs
- 40) Baby
-

**Appendix B: Path Diagram and Fit Measures in the Validation**

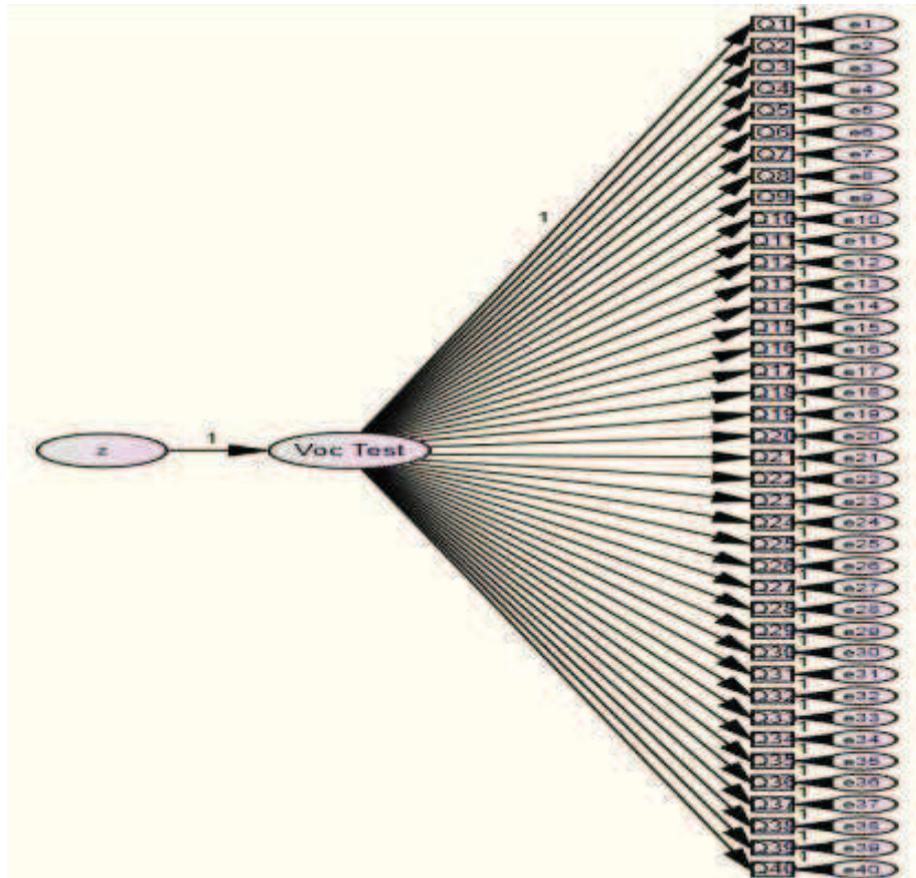


Figure B. Path diagram of one factor model

Table B

*Fit Measures*

<i>p</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>Cmin/df</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cmin</i>
1.000	0.000	0.96	740	657.7

**Appendix C: Tables for Checking the Assumptions of ANCOVA**

Table C1

*Tests of Equality of Variance*

<i>Test</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Levene	Vocabulary test	1.6691	98	.199

**82 Perspectives of L2 graduate students and, ...**

Table C2

*Analysis of Covariance on Vocabulary Scores for the Interaction Effect*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	1852.76	3	617.59	18.26	.000
Intercept	5429.80	1	5429.80	160.52	.000
Pretest	1720.87	1	1720.87	50.87	.000
Treatment * Pretest	31.61	1	31.61	.935	.336
Error	3247.35	96	33.83		
Total	58785	100			
Corrected Total	5100.11	99			

Table C3

*Tests of Equality of Variance*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Vocabulary	.283	3	96	.838

Table C4

*Analysis of Covariance on Vocabulary Scores for the Interaction Effect*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	1827.19	3	609.06	18.26	.000
Intercept	5386.99	1	5386.99	158.01	.000
Pretest	1759.88	1	1759.88	51.62	.000
Gender* Pretest	6.05	1	6.05	.177	.675
Error	3272.92	96	34.09		
Total	58785	100			
Corrected Total	5100.11	99			