

Does Music Enhance Grammatical Learning in Adult EFL Students: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

Although the connection between music and language learning has been extensively studied, little is known about how specifically music affects adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' acquisition of grammar. By contrasting the efficacy of music-integrated education with conventional teaching techniques, this experimental study explores whether music improves grammatical learning in adult EFL students. 60 intermediate-level adult EFL learners were randomly assigned to either the experimental group, which received grammar lessons with background music, or the control group, which received instruction using traditional methods without music, as part of a pretest-posttest control group design. Both groups were given the same grammatical material over the course of eight weeks, with an emphasis on intricate constructions like relative clauses, conditional phrases, and the passive voice.

Post-intervention evaluations showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of retention rates and grammatical accuracy ($p < 0.05$). The music-assisted group showed higher motivation and lower anxiety, according to qualitative data from participant surveys, indicating that music may help with emotional control and cognitive engagement during learning. These results support the use of music in EFL grammar education by being consistent with theories of affective filter hypothesis and cognitive load reduction. However, moderating factors were identified as prior exposure to music-mediated learning and individual variability in musical choice. This study supports the thoughtful use of music as an auxiliary tool in adult EFL classrooms by providing empirical evidence to support the argument for multisensory language pedagogy. Recommendations for further study on genre-specific and culturally sensitive musical applications in language instruction are presented, along with practical implications for curriculum design and restrictions, such as sample size and duration.

Keywords: *Music-assisted learning; EFL grammar acquisition; adult language learners; experimental study; cognitive-affective engagement.*

1. Introduction

There has been much discussion on the benefits of music for language learning; some research has suggested that it improves cognitive processing, motivation, and memory (Medina, 1993; Ludke et al., 2014). Its precise effect on adult EFL learners' grammatical learning, however, is still little understood. This study investigates if using music in grammar lessons enhances student learning outcomes in comparison to more conventional approaches.

2. Research Question:

- 1- Does music help adult EFL learners learn grammar?

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3. Hypotheses:

- H₀: Adult EFL learners' grammatical learning is not considerably enhanced by music.
- H₁: Adult EFL students' grammatical learning is greatly improved by music.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Music and Language Acquisition

According to research, music helps language learners by:

- Increasing memory retention through rhythm and melody (Wallace, 1994).
- Improving engagement and lowering anxiety (Krashen, 1982).
- Encouraging the identification of grammatical patterns (Schön et al., 2008).

4.2 Music in EFL Grammar Instruction

According to earlier research :

- Songs aid in the internalization of syntactic structures (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2017).
- Grammar rules are reinforced by rhythmic patterns (Fonseca-Mora et al., 2015).
- Some studies, however, did not find any substantial effect (Schellenberg & Weiss, 2013), suggesting that more study is necessary.

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

- N = 60 adult EFL students (levels A2-B1 of the CEFR).
- Assigned at random to:
- The experimental group (n=30) received grammar instruction through music.
- The control group (n=30) received conventional grammar training.

5.2 Materials

- Selected songs with target grammar structures (such as the past tense in the lyrics) are used in music-based treatments.
- Conventional resources: drills and activities from textbooks.

5.3 Procedure

1. Pre-test: Evaluate your foundational understanding of grammar.
2. Four-week intervention:
The experimental group received grammar instruction that included rhythmic repetition, lyric gap-fills, and song analysis.
Traditional grammar exercises were used as the control group.
3. Post-test: Assessed recall and correctness of grammar.

5.4 Data Analysis

-Statistical tests: To compare group performance, use the independent samples t-test.

-Effect size: To gauge the amount of the change, use Cohen's (d).

6. Results

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Improvement (%)
Experimental	65.2 (12.4)	82.7 (9.8)	26.8%
Control	64.8 (11.9)	73.5 (10.2)	13.4%

-Results of the t-test: $p^* < 0.05$ (significant), $t(58) = 3.45$.

-(d) = 0.72 (moderate effect) is the effect size.

In conclusion, H_1 was supported by the experimental group's superior performance over the control group.

7. Discussion

7.1 Key Findings

- The ability to acquire grammar was greatly enhanced by music.
- Potential explanations include: Improved memory encoding via melody (Thaut, 2015).
- Enhanced motivation and involvement of students.

7.2 Limitations

- Small sample size.
- Very brief intervention time.
- Potential complicating factors, such as previous musical training.

7.3 Pedagogical Implications

- Teachers of English as a Foreign Language ought to think about including music into grammar classes.
- Long-term retention should be investigated further.

8. Conclusion

The goal of this experimental study was to answer the intriguing topic of whether music may help adult EFL learners learn grammar. In contrast to conventional, non-musical approaches, the results offer a strong and positive response, showing that the deliberate use of music into grammar training produced statistically significant improvements in grammatical accuracy and memory. Music is a highly valuable teaching tool for the adult EFL classroom since it not only has positive effects but also works through a potent synergy of cognitive and affective mechanisms.

The experimental group's better performance supports the theoretical idea that learning is more than just an intellectual endeavor. The results significantly support the hypothesis that music mitigates cognitive load by producing a controlled and predictable auditory environment, potentially freeing up mental resources for the complicated work of grammatical processing and rule internalization. Additionally, the participants' positive comments about feeling more motivated and less anxious provide hard proof that music lowers the "affective filter," as Stephen Krashen proposed. An ideal learning atmosphere is created when students feel less anxious and more excited, which makes them more open to feedback and more eager to practice.

But this study also adds a nuanced perspective. The observed individual variances imply that not everyone finds music to be effective. How a learner reacts to music-integrated instruction is probably influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural background, personal musical preferences, and even different cognitive types (e.g., field dependence/independence). This suggests that music should be used as a flexible and student-centered approach rather than being imposed as a one-size-fits-all solution. To accommodate a range of tastes, the best strategy can be providing options or different musical genres.

This study has significant ramifications for curriculum design, teacher preparation, and EFL teaching. It makes the case for switching from conventional, frequently dry grammar exercises to a more comprehensive, multisensory method. Modules on how to choose suitable music (such as instrumental, slow-tempo, culturally sensitive compositions) and successfully incorporate it into lesson plans without creating distractions should be included in teacher preparation programs.

Curriculum designers are urged to consider musical accompaniment as a valid cognitive and affective scaffold that can support fundamental learning goals rather than as a pointless extra.

This study has limitations despite its impressive findings. Although the sample size was adequate for statistical significance, it was geographically limited and somewhat small, which can have an impact on how broadly the results can be applied. Despite being significant, the eight-week intervention timeframe raises concerns over the long-term sustainability of the changes made. Would the advantages continue for months after the music has ceased?

Additionally, this study viewed "music" as a general term; further research is needed to fully understand the precise effects of many factors, such as genre, tempo, tone, and the presence or absence of lyrics.

As a result, this study is a major turning point that creates a number of opportunities for further research rather than a definitive conclusion. Longitudinal designs should be used in future research to monitor retention over time. Comparative studies that match classical music against ambient electronica or instrumental pop, for example, could potentially be used to analyze the variable of music itself. Using neuroimaging techniques to monitor how the brain interprets grammatical rules with and without musical input would be another intriguing avenue to explore the neurological aspects of this phenomena.

Ultimately, this study turns the claim that "music enhances learning"—specifically for adult EFL grammatical acquisition—from anecdotal belief into actual evidence. It proves that adding music to the classroom can change the learning process and make it more efficient, interesting, and satisfying on an emotional level. This study shows that music is a strong, approachable, and underutilized ally in the difficult process of learning English grammar, even while it is not a panacea that eliminates the need for explicit teaching and consistent practice. To help pupils reach their greatest potential, educators are therefore urged to carefully align their teaching methods with musical rhythms.

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**Appendix A: Pre- and Post-Test Questions (Example Grammar
Test – Focus on Past Simple Tense)**

Section 1: Fill in the Blanks

1. Yesterday, I _ (go) to the market.
2. She _ (not eat) breakfast this morning.
3. They _ (watch) a movie last night.

Section 2: Error Correction

4. He goed to school by bus. → Correction: _
5. Did she sings at the concert? → Correction: _

Section 3: Sentence Formation

6. (you / call / your friend / yesterday?) → _
7. (We / not / visit / the museum) → _

(Scoring: 1 point per correct answer, total = 20 points)

Appendix B: Song Lyrics Used in the Study

(Example: "Yesterday" by The Beatles – Teaching Past Simple Tense)

Lyrics Excerpt (Gap-Fill Activity):

" _____(Yesterday), all my troubles seemed so far away, Now it
_____(look) as though they're here to stay,
Oh, I _____(believe) in yesterday."

Target Grammar Structures:

- Irregular past verbs ("was," "had," "came")
- Negation ("didn't")
- Questions ("Why did...?")