UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' VIEWS ON VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH ED SHEERAN'S SONGS

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ABSTRACT

Abstract—This present study was conducted to investigate how Thai EFL undergraduate students perceived usage of Ed Sheeran's song to learn vocabulary according to vocabulary learning framework of Nation (2024). This quantitative survey study was equipped with online questionnaire inquiries in order to collect data from 314 Thai undergraduate students studying in English related majors in a Rajabhat university in Bangkok derived through snowball sampling technique. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of average and standard deviation and interpreted according to 5-Likert-scale interpretation. It could be observed in the results that songs of Ed Sheeran were perceived to be appropriate for vocabulary learning at high level (mean = 3.79, S.D. = 0.94) especially in terms of focus learners' attention on vocabulary learning (mean = 3.82, S.D. = 0.95).

Keywords—EFL, Vocabulary, Undergraduate Students, Perception, Songs

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

To investigate Thai undergraduate students' perception towards learning vocabulary through Ed Sheeran's songs.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary has been considered an essential linguistic resource for language development especially in EFL learning. Linguistic knowledge concerning vocabulary meanings and functions could help EFL learners to expand their intake of language input as well as express themselves more effectively in a variety of contexts (Rahman, 2018; Rahman et. al. 2024). However, in Thai EFL communication context a large number of learners could be seen grounded within limited opportunities to use and exercise their language practice. Entertainment media such as movies and music could then be found perceived as language learning media to maintain EFL learners' input and exposure to target language. In addition to a study by Anuwech, Chimkhlai, and Sarot (2021) the majority of EFL teachers and learners

participating in their survey maintained that extensive listening was effectively regarded as most preferrable and very useful practice for enhancing both language resources and skills. As songs were probed an effective learning media for EFL vocabulary learning by Phisutthangkoon and Panich (2016) maintained that students could be observed to learn better in more relaxed atmosphere and feel more comfortable when having easier access to new information. This could enhance their motivation to learn new vocabulary and retain longer attention span. However, beyond meticulously planned classroom instruction, individual vocabulary learning through songs outside class by autonomous learners whose learning and leisure interests combined was yet to be examined. This present study was therefore conducted with the main objective to investigate Thai undergraduate students' perception towards learning vocabulary through Ed Sheeran's songs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary Learning

This present study followed and adopted vocabulary learning framework of Nation (2024) to define and discuss how Thai EFL undergraduate students who participated in the survey perceive usage of ED Sheeran's song to assist their English vocabulary learning.
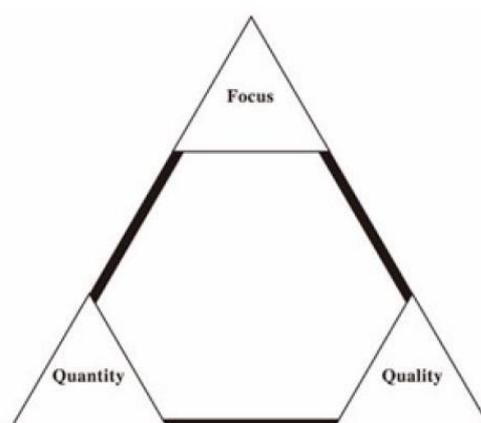

Figure 1 Framework of Vocabulary Learning Derived from Nation (2024)

Nation (2014) proposes that effective learning of vocabulary should be based on retention of strong linkage of forms and meaning in learners' memory. He defines the triangle model above as a representation of cognitive requirements which could affect vocabulary learning. Each corner of the triangle represents three major aspects of cognitive requirement including focus of learners, quantity of cognitive function, and quality of learning. Nation (2024) believes that all these components are closely connected.

Vocabulary Learning Component 1: Focus

In the component of focus could be observed to develop and foster vocabulary growth starting from drawing and directing attention to form, meaning, and function until transferring

further attention to functioning the derived lexical knowledge in comprehensible and accurate usage in relevant contexts.

Vocabulary Learning Component 2: Quantity

Regard the component of quantity, it could be observed through quantity of attention measured by amount of repetition and the length of time sustaining of attention. Throughout some certain number of repetitions and duration of attention span invested into developing skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, more growth in vocabulary quantity could be effectively developed. Nation (2024) also maintains that "the more repetition and attention, the more vocabulary knowledge retention could be observed".

Vocabulary Learning Component 3: Quality

The last vocabulary learning component, quality has been defined by Nation (2024) as enrichment of knowledge through making connection between present learning to existing knowledge in addition to adding on more aspects of various usage or dimension of meaning comprehension into knowledge retention and retrieval. To gauge levels of vocabulary learning effectiveness concerning quality, a variety of relevant factors could be observed including number of words retrieved and retained as well as evidence on distinctiveness of meaning comprehension in various contexts.

Related Studies

As Susamawathanakun, Yodchim, Mongkolchai, and Boonphadung (2025) assert that EFL learners of young adult age group seemed to prefer learning foreign language at their own pace through diverse content, and repeating their practice until they achieved full comprehension of the material learned, songs could be an appropriate extensive learning media for EFL learners who would like to take charge of their own vocabulary learning. Furthermore, they could also pause and resume their learning through listening at their convenient. This could practically help reducing cognitive overload and focus on particular of audio they found interesting or relevant to their needs (Susamawathanakun et. al. 2025).

In a study of Phongploenpis (2023) an advocation for more exposure to target language was raised due to the findings found. According to her qualitative findings, more extensive exposure to target language of learning could help learners fostering more control on their affective factors and maintain their conversations flow. To support more exposure to vocabulary and practical usage of target language Wardiman, Aminah, and & Dewi (2022) assert that listening practice using songs could result in positive development in language learning. In addition to those previous studies, Phisutthangkoon and Panich (2016) also found that their EFL student participants demonstrating positive attitudes toward learning activities equipped with songs to develop their vocabulary learning and retention. They further add that learning English through song activities could be considered encouraging for raising EFL students' vocabulary knowledge and maintaining vocabulary retention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quantitative survey research was conducted to investigate the perception of learning vocabulary using Ed Sheeran's songs in the population of Thai EFL undergraduate students studying in English-related majors in a Rajabhat university in Bangkok. The sample of 314 participants were derived using simple random sampling through snowball techniques. Series of questions in the online survey inquiry were derived based on vocabulary learning framework of Nation (2024) as can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Synthesis of Nation's (2024) Vocabulary Learning Framework to Research Instruments

Vocabulary Learning Components	Survey Questions
Focus: Attention to learning	1. Ed Sheeran's songs can attract learners' attention to vocabulary learning. 2. Ed Sheeran's songs can trigger learners' interest leading to further understanding. 3. Ed Sheeran's songs provide EFL learners with relevant vocabulary transferable to daily communication.
Quantity: Amount of attention given to learning	4. To what extend you repeat vocabulary learning through Ed Sheeran's songs? 5. To what extend that Ed Sheeran's songs help recall vocabulary you have learned? 6. To what extend Ed Sheeran's songs provide variety of vocabulary relevant to daily communication?
Quality: Depth of meaningful learning to strengthen connection and elaboration of knowledge	7. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through a variety of meaningful samples. 8. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through meaning analysis. 9. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through practical language use.

The survey questions were designed to elicit participants' level of perception represented by 5-scale value ranging from 1 to 5 to represent to which extend they agreed with or perceived each statement of the survey questions. The survey questions as research the main research instrument were validated by 3 experts of EFL professionals (IOC = 0.83) and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α = 0.97). Data derived from the survey were

quantitatively computed and analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Quantitative findings of the survey can be observed in Table 2 as follows. The overall perception of Thai EFL undergraduate students participating in this survey study could be found at high level for all components of vocabulary learning. In addition, the component of focus could be observed to yield the highest average of 3.82 (S.D. = 0.95) whereas quantity and quality were rated relatively comparable at 3.79 (S.D. = 0.94) and 3.76 (S.D. = 0.92) respectively.

Table 2 Quantitative Results of the Survey

Vocabulary Learning Components	Survey Questions	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Focus	1. Ed Sheeran's songs can attract learners' attention to vocabulary learning.	3.88	1.02	Good
	2. Ed Sheeran's songs can trigger learners' interest leading to further understanding.	3.78	0.91	Good
	3. Ed Sheeran's songs provide EFL learners with relevant vocabulary transferable to daily communication.	3.80	0.99	Good
Total		3.82	0.95	Good
Quantity	4. To what extent you repeat vocabulary learning through Ed Sheeran's songs?	3.78	0.96	Good
	5. To what extent that Ed Sheeran's songs help recall vocabulary you have learned?	3.79	0.96	Good
	6. To what extent Ed Sheeran's songs provide variety of vocabulary relevant to daily communication?	3.81	0.94	Good
Total		3.79	0.94	Good

Quality	7. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through a variety of meaningful samples.	3.72	0.96	Good
	8. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through meaning analysis.	3.78	0.87	Good
	9. Ed Sheeran's songs encourage vocabulary learning through practical language use.	3.77	0.97	Good
Total		3.76	0.92	Good

Overall Mean = 3.79, S.D. = 0.94 (N = 314)

In the component of focus, it could be seen that question 1 regarding the extent to which Ed Sheeran's songs could draw EFL student participants to vocabulary learning was rated with highest average (mean = 3.88, S.D. 1.02) followed by question 3 on the extent to which relevant vocabulary transferable to daily communication could be found in ED Sheeran's songs (mean = 3.80, S.D. 0.99) while the lowest average concerning the component of focus was found in question 2 on how much Ed Sheeran's songs could trigger learners' interest leading to further vocabulary learning (mean = 3.78, S.D. = 0.91).

Next, in the second component of Nation (2024) vocabulary learning framework regarding quantity of learning, the highest rating could be observed in question 6 concerning degree of vocabulary variety relevant to daily communication in Ed Sheeran's song (mean = 3.81, S.D. 0.94) followed by question 5 on how much Ed Sheeran's song could help EFL student participants recall the vocabulary learned (mean = 3.79, S.D. = 0.96) and question 4 on how much repetition of vocabulary learning using Ed Sheeran's song they had (mean = 3.78, S.D. = 0.96) respectively.

Finally, in quality, the last component of vocabulary learning according to Nation (2024) question 8 on how much Ed Sheeran's songs could support EFL student participants to learn vocabulary into more depth of meaning analysis was found to gain highest average (mean = 3.78, S.D. = 0.87) followed by question 9 on how much Ed Sheeran's songs provided them with vocabulary learning through practical language usage (mean = 3.77, S.D. = 0.97) while question 7 on vocabulary learning through a variety of meaningful samples could be seen receiving the lowest average (mean = 3.72, S.D. = 0.96).

Based the present survey findings it could be concluded that the most prominent aspect of vocabulary learning effectively benefitted from using Ed Sheeran's songs could be concerning

focus. However, all three components of vocabulary learning surveyed here could be relatively benefitted from using Ed Sheeran's songs with not much significant difference.

DISCUSSION

As this present study aimed to investigate how EFL undergraduate student perceived learning vocabulary through Ed Sheeran's song, and found that the participants perceived Ed Sheeran's song highly appropriate for vocabulary learning especially in terms of drawing and directing learners' focus. This particular finding was relatively in line with research of Wardiman et. al. (2022) with narration of how EFL students learned vocabulary through songs stating that songs of learners' interest with comprehensible and interesting input could trigger them to pause and repeat their listening then look up for lyrics. Throughout these steps further learning with repetition could be encouraged. However, in terms of quality which involves more depth of meaningful learning, vocabulary analysis, retention and retrieval, this present survey study found that it was rated the lowest among other components. This appeared to contradict to the findings of Phisutthankoon and Panich (2016) which highlighted potential of using songs for vocabulary learning in terms of knowledge retention.

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