

SONGS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The integration of songs into second and foreign language instruction has gained increasing scholarly attention due to their potential to facilitate linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural dimensions of language learning. This theoretical study critically examines the pedagogical value of songs by synthesizing established theories and conceptual frameworks from applied linguistics, educational psychology, and language acquisition research. Drawing upon Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, Dual Coding Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, the paper explores the mechanisms through which songs contribute to effective language acquisition. The analysis highlights the role of songs in enhancing vocabulary development, grammatical competence, pronunciation, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading, and writing skills while simultaneously fostering learner motivation, reducing language anxiety, strengthening memory retention, and promoting intercultural awareness. Furthermore, the study discusses the pedagogical implications of incorporating authentic musical materials into learner-centered language classrooms and addresses challenges related to song selection, cultural appropriateness, and instructional implementation. Based on the synthesis of theoretical perspectives, an integrated conceptual framework is proposed to explain the multidimensional contribution of songs to second and foreign language learning. The study concludes that songs constitute a theoretically grounded and pedagogically robust instructional resource capable of promoting meaningful language acquisition and communicative competence. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers seeking to advance innovative and evidence-informed approaches to language teaching.

Keywords: *second language acquisition; foreign language education; music-assisted language learning; communicative language teaching; language pedagogy; applied linguistics.*

1.1 Background of the Study

The rapid expansion of globalization, technological advancement, and international mobility has significantly increased the demand for second and foreign language proficiency in educational, professional, and social contexts. Language competence is now recognized as a fundamental twenty-first-century skill that promotes intercultural communication, global collaboration, and lifelong learning. Consequently, language education has undergone a paradigm shift from teacher-centered approaches emphasizing grammar translation and memorization to learner-centered pedagogies that encourage meaningful communication, interaction, and authentic language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Within this evolving educational landscape, the integration of songs into language instruction has gained considerable attention as an innovative and effective pedagogical strategy. Songs represent authentic and multimodal learning resources that combine linguistic input with rhythm, melody, emotion, and cultural meaning, thereby creating engaging and memorable learning experiences (Murphey, 1992). Unlike traditional teaching materials, songs expose learners to authentic vocabulary, natural pronunciation, grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and sociocultural contexts, enabling language acquisition in meaningful communicative settings (Medina, 1993). Moreover, the repetitive and rhythmic nature of songs enhances memory retention and facilitates vocabulary recall, while their emotional appeal increases learner motivation, lowers anxiety, and promotes active classroom participation, consistent with theories of affective learning and language acquisition (Krashen, 1985; Paivio, 1986).

Despite growing empirical evidence supporting the educational value of songs, their theoretical foundations remain dispersed across multiple disciplines, including applied linguistics, educational psychology, cognitive science, and sociocultural theory. Although individual theories explain specific aspects of music-assisted language learning, there remains a lack of an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes these perspectives. Therefore, this study seeks to consolidate the theoretical foundations underpinning the use of songs in second and foreign language education, thereby providing a comprehensive framework to inform future research and evidence-based pedagogical practice.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The incorporation of songs into second and foreign language instruction has become increasingly common due to their recognized potential to enhance learners' linguistic competence, motivation, and classroom engagement. Numerous empirical studies have reported that songs positively influence vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, and learners' affective outcomes by creating enjoyable and authentic learning experiences (Murphey, 1992; Engh, 2013). Consequently, songs are widely regarded as valuable supplementary materials that promote learner-centered and communicative language instruction.

Despite these pedagogical advantages, the theoretical foundations explaining the effectiveness of songs in language learning remain fragmented and insufficiently integrated. Existing research has predominantly focused on isolated instructional outcomes, such as vocabulary retention, pronunciation improvement, or learner motivation, with limited attention given to the underlying theoretical mechanisms that account for these benefits (Ludke et al., 2014). Furthermore, explanations are dispersed across diverse disciplines, including second language acquisition, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, educational psychology, sociocultural theory, and music education. Although theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, Dual Coding Theory, and Communicative

Language Teaching each explain particular aspects of music-assisted language learning, they have rarely been synthesized into a unified conceptual perspective.

This theoretical fragmentation presents a significant gap in the literature, limiting educators' and researchers' ability to fully understand how songs facilitate language acquisition through interconnected linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural processes. Without a comprehensive theoretical framework, the pedagogical application of songs often remains intuitive rather than evidence-informed. Therefore, there is a need for a systematic theoretical synthesis that integrates established language learning theories to explain the multidimensional role of songs in second and foreign language education. Such a framework can provide stronger theoretical guidance for classroom practice, curriculum development, and future empirical research in music-assisted language learning.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the role of songs in second and foreign language teaching and learning by synthesizing established theories from applied linguistics, educational psychology, and second language acquisition. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how theoretical perspectives, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, Dual Coding Theory, and Communicative Language Teaching, collectively explain the pedagogical value of songs in facilitating language learning (Krashen, 1985; Paivio, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). By integrating these complementary perspectives, the study aims to propose a unified conceptual framework that explains the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural mechanisms through which songs enhance language acquisition. The findings are expected to provide a stronger theoretical foundation for music-assisted language learning and offer evidence-informed insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers to support effective and learner-centered language instruction.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. **To examine** the theoretical foundations supporting the use of songs in second and foreign language teaching and learning.
2. **To analyse** the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural contributions of songs to second and foreign language acquisition.

3. **To develop** an integrated conceptual framework that explains the pedagogical role of songs in promoting effective second and foreign language learning.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Which theoretical perspectives explain the effectiveness of songs in second and foreign language learning?
2. How do songs contribute to the development of language proficiency?
3. What cognitive and affective mechanisms support learning through songs?
4. How do songs promote communicative competence and intercultural awareness?
5. What conceptual framework best explains the multidimensional role of songs in language education?

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Songs in Language Education

Songs have long been recognized as effective pedagogical resources in second and foreign language education because they integrate linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of learning. Educational songs are defined as musical compositions intentionally or authentically used to facilitate language acquisition by exposing learners to meaningful linguistic input embedded in rhythm, melody, and repetition (Murphey, 1992). Their multimodal nature enables learners to process verbal and auditory information simultaneously, thereby enhancing comprehension and long-term memory (Paivio, 1986).

The use of songs in language teaching has evolved alongside communicative and learner-centered pedagogies. Early language instruction relied heavily on grammar-focused methods, whereas contemporary approaches emphasize authentic materials that promote interaction and meaningful communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Songs have consequently become valuable instructional resources because they expose learners to authentic vocabulary, natural pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, and cultural contexts that are often absent from conventional textbooks (Medina, 1993; Engh, 2013). Their repetitive structure also facilitates vocabulary retention, pronunciation practice, and listening comprehension, while encouraging active learner participation (Ludke et al., 2014).

Recent studies further suggest that songs promote learner motivation, reduce language anxiety, and foster positive classroom engagement, thereby supporting Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter

Hypothesis. Advances in digital technologies and music-streaming platforms have expanded opportunities for integrating songs into language instruction, enabling teachers to create interactive and personalized learning experiences (Fonseca-Mora & Herrero-Machancoses, 2016). Moreover, songs function as authentic instructional materials that enhance intercultural competence by introducing learners to the cultural values, traditions, and social practices of target-language communities (Lems, 2018). Consequently, songs are increasingly viewed not merely as supplementary teaching aids but as pedagogically robust resources that support holistic language development through authentic, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Language Learning

The pedagogical effectiveness of songs in second and foreign language education is supported by several complementary theories from applied linguistics, educational psychology, and cognitive science. Among the most influential is Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input slightly beyond their current level of proficiency (Krashen, 1985). Songs provide authentic, contextualized language input that enhances vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation while simultaneously lowering learners' affective barriers, as explained by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in language development (Vygotsky, 1978). Collaborative singing, lyric-based discussions, and group activities foster communication and enable learners to construct knowledge through interaction. Similarly, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory recognizes musical intelligence as a distinct cognitive domain, suggesting that music-based instruction can enhance language learning by engaging multiple intelligences simultaneously (Gardner, 2011). From a cognitive perspective, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory explains that combining verbal information with melody and rhythm strengthens memory and facilitates long-term retention (Paivio, 1986). Constructivist learning theory further argues that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences, making songs effective tools for contextualized language learning (Bruner, 1996).

Contemporary learner-centered pedagogies, particularly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), advocate the use of authentic materials to promote meaningful communication and learner engagement (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Songs align closely with these principles by exposing learners to natural language, cultural expressions, and real-world communication. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives suggest that songs support language acquisition through interconnected linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural processes, providing a robust foundation for music-assisted language learning and informing evidence-based instructional practices.

2.3 Empirical Evidence

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that songs positively influence multiple dimensions of second and foreign language learning, although the magnitude of these effects varies across learner populations, instructional contexts, and research designs. Early studies established that song-based instruction enhances vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and learner motivation by providing authentic, repetitive, and meaningful linguistic input (Medina, 1993; Murphey, 1992; Ludke et al., 2014). A meta-analysis by Odo (2022) further reported a substantial positive effect of English songs on second-language vocabulary learning, particularly when instructional activities were explicitly aligned with learning objectives.

Recent systematic reviews reinforce these findings while highlighting the need for stronger methodological rigor. A review of intervention studies involving young learners found generally positive outcomes for vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing; however, many studies employed designs that limited strong causal inferences. Likewise, a comprehensive review of music-assisted second-language learning concluded that music supports language development through enhanced memory, rhythmic processing, learner engagement, and affective regulation, although further high-quality empirical studies remain necessary.

Recent Scopus-indexed studies also indicate that songs facilitate pronunciation accuracy, oral fluency, listening engagement, intercultural awareness, and classroom participation by combining multimodal input with authentic communication and emotional engagement (Engh, 2013; Fonseca-Mora & Herrero-Machancoses, 2016; Lems, 2018). Emerging evidence further suggests that digital music platforms, lyric-based mobile applications, and multimedia learning environments increase learner autonomy and motivation while supporting communicative competence. Overall, the empirical literature suggests that songs constitute an effective pedagogical resource for language learning; however, inconsistencies in research methodology and theoretical grounding indicate the need for more rigorous, longitudinal, and theory-driven investigations to establish robust evidence for music-assisted language learning.

2.4 Research Gap

The existing body of literature provides substantial evidence that songs positively influence second and foreign language learning by enhancing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, learner motivation, and intercultural awareness (Engh, 2013; Ludke et al., 2014; Odo, 2022). Theoretical perspectives, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, Dual Coding Theory, and Communicative Language Teaching, have individually explained specific aspects of music-assisted language learning (Krashen, 1985; Paivio, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Nevertheless, these studies and theories remain largely fragmented, addressing isolated

dimensions of language learning rather than presenting a comprehensive explanation of how songs facilitate language acquisition.

Furthermore, empirical research has predominantly focused on evaluating the effectiveness of songs in improving individual language skills through experimental or classroom-based interventions. Comparatively fewer studies have synthesized theoretical perspectives to explain the interconnected linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural processes underlying music-assisted language learning (Fonseca-Mora & Herrero-Machancoses, 2016). In addition, inconsistencies in research design, learner characteristics, instructional contexts, and assessment methods have resulted in varied findings, limiting the generalizability of existing evidence (Odo, 2022). Although recent technological developments have expanded opportunities for integrating digital music resources into language education, theoretical discussions addressing these emerging practices remain limited.

Accordingly, a significant gap exists in the literature regarding the development of an integrated theoretical framework that consolidates established language acquisition and educational psychology theories to explain the multidimensional pedagogical role of songs. This study addresses this gap by synthesizing major theoretical perspectives into a unified conceptual framework that explains how songs support linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural dimensions of second and foreign language learning. The proposed framework is expected to provide a stronger theoretical foundation for future empirical research and inform evidence-based, learner-centered instructional practices in language education.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in established theories from second language acquisition, educational psychology, and cognitive science to explain the pedagogical role of songs in second and foreign language teaching and learning. Rather than relying on a single theoretical perspective, this study adopts an integrated framework that demonstrates how songs facilitate language acquisition through interconnected linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural processes.

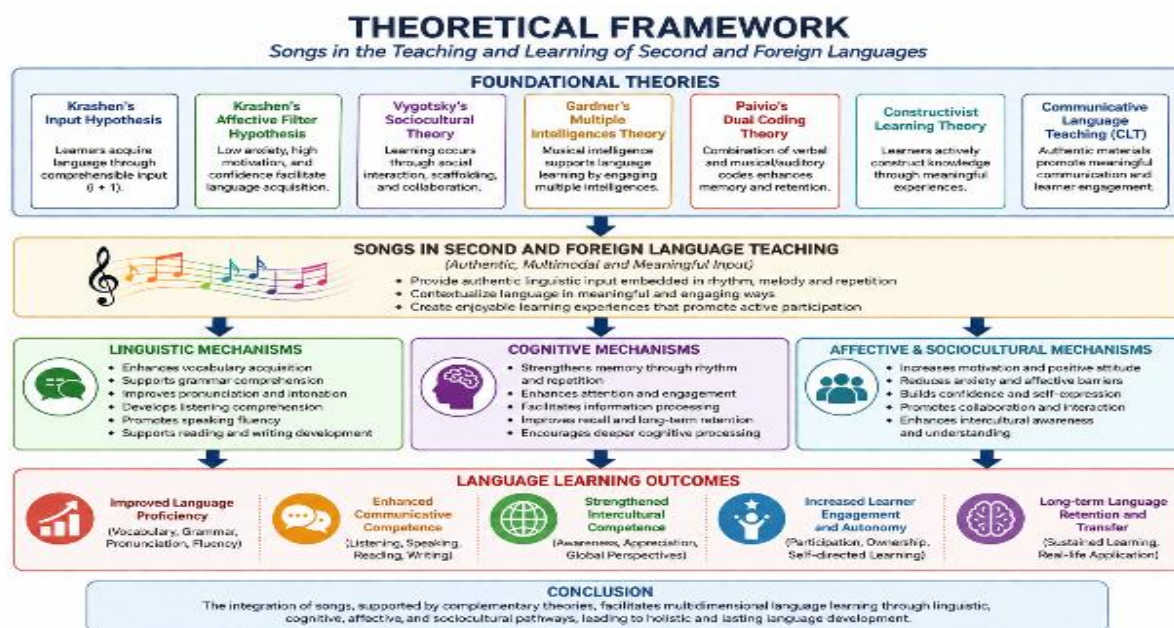
Krashen's (1985) **Input Hypothesis** provides the primary theoretical foundation by proposing that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input slightly beyond their current level of proficiency ($i+1$). Songs provide authentic linguistic input through natural vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse patterns, enabling learners to acquire language in meaningful contexts. Complementing this perspective, Krashen's **Affective Filter Hypothesis** suggests that motivation, confidence, and low anxiety enhance language acquisition. The enjoyable and engaging nature of songs reduces learners' affective barriers, thereby promoting greater participation and language retention.

The framework further incorporates **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory** (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that language learning is socially mediated through interaction, collaboration, and scaffolding. Song-based classroom activities, such as group singing, lyric discussions, and collaborative tasks, create opportunities for meaningful communication and cooperative learning. **Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory** (Gardner, 2011) also supports the integration of songs by recognizing musical intelligence as an important dimension of learning that complements linguistic intelligence.

From a cognitive perspective, **Paivio's Dual Coding Theory** (Paivio, 1986) explains that language is retained more effectively when verbal information is reinforced by auditory and musical stimuli. Rhythm, melody, and repetition strengthen memory, facilitate vocabulary recall, and improve pronunciation. Furthermore, **Constructivist Learning Theory** (Bruner, 1996) argues that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences, while **Communicative Language Teaching** emphasizes authentic communication using real-world language materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

By synthesizing these complementary theories, this study proposes that songs function as authentic, multimodal instructional resources that simultaneously enhance linguistic competence, cognitive processing, learner motivation, emotional engagement, and intercultural awareness. This integrated theoretical framework provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding the multidimensional contribution of songs to second and foreign language education and serves as the basis for the proposed conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1. Integrated theoretical framework of songs in second and foreign language teaching and learning.



Source: Developed by the author(s) based on Krashen (1985), Vygotsky (1978), Gardner (2011), Paivio (1986), Bruner (1996), and Richards and Rodgers (2014).

3.1 Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Krashen's Input Hypothesis is one of the most influential theories in second language acquisition, proposing that learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to **comprehensible input** that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency, referred to as $i + 1$ (Krashen, 1985). Rather than emphasizing explicit grammar instruction, the theory argues that language acquisition occurs naturally through meaningful exposure to authentic linguistic input in low-stress learning environments. This perspective highlights the importance of providing learners with rich and understandable language that promotes gradual linguistic development.

In the context of second and foreign language teaching, songs represent an effective source of comprehensible input because they present vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and discourse in meaningful and authentic contexts (Murphey, 1992). The combination of rhythm, melody, and repetition makes linguistic input more accessible and memorable, enabling learners to infer meaning from contextual cues while reinforcing language patterns (Medina, 1993). Songs also expose learners to natural speech, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, thereby facilitating implicit language acquisition through repeated listening and meaningful engagement.

Recent studies have further demonstrated that music-based instruction enhances vocabulary retention, listening comprehension, and pronunciation, supporting Krashen's assertion that meaningful input promotes language acquisition (Ludke et al., 2014; Odo, 2022). Therefore, the Input Hypothesis provides a strong theoretical foundation for integrating songs into learner-centered second and foreign language classrooms.

3.2 Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that emotional factors, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, significantly influence second language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). According to the theory, learners acquire language more effectively when their affective filter is low, allowing comprehensible input to be processed successfully. Conversely, high levels of anxiety or low motivation can hinder language acquisition by blocking learners' ability to internalize linguistic input.

Songs play a vital role in lowering the affective filter by creating an enjoyable, relaxed, and supportive learning environment. Their rhythmic and engaging nature reduces language anxiety, increases learner motivation, and enhances self-confidence, encouraging active participation in

classroom activities (Murphey, 1992; Engh, 2013). Through repeated exposure to authentic language in an emotionally positive context, learners become more willing to communicate and practice the target language. Consequently, the Affective Filter Hypothesis provides a strong theoretical rationale for incorporating songs into second and foreign language instruction to promote meaningful and effective language learning.

3.3 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that language learning is fundamentally a social process in which knowledge is constructed through interaction with others and supported by cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Central to this theory are the concepts of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** and **scaffolding**, which suggest that learners achieve higher levels of language proficiency when guided by teachers or more capable peers. Meaningful interaction and collaborative learning are therefore essential for language development.

In second and foreign language classrooms, songs provide opportunities for collaborative activities such as group singing, lyric discussions, role-plays, and pair work, fostering communication and social engagement. These activities encourage learners to negotiate meaning, share ideas, and receive immediate feedback, thereby facilitating language acquisition within the ZPD (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Furthermore, songs introduce learners to the cultural values and social practices of target-language communities, enhancing both communicative competence and intercultural awareness. Thus, Sociocultural Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for integrating songs into learner-centered language instruction.

3.4 Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory proposes that individuals possess diverse forms of intelligence, each contributing uniquely to learning and problem-solving (Gardner, 2011). Among the eight intelligences identified, **musical intelligence**, **linguistic intelligence**, and **interpersonal intelligence** are particularly relevant to second and foreign language learning. The theory challenges the traditional view of intelligence as a single cognitive ability and advocates instructional approaches that accommodate learners' varied strengths and learning preferences.

Songs effectively integrate these intelligences by combining music, language, and social interaction within meaningful learning activities. Through melody, rhythm, and lyrics, songs stimulate musical and linguistic intelligences, enhancing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and language comprehension. Collaborative activities such as group singing and lyric interpretation further develop interpersonal intelligence by encouraging communication and cooperative learning (Armstrong, 2018). By engaging multiple intelligences simultaneously, songs create inclusive and learner-centered classrooms that increase motivation, participation, and knowledge retention. Consequently, Gardner's theory provides a valuable theoretical

justification for incorporating songs as a multimodal instructional resource in second and foreign language education.

3.5 Dual Coding Theory

Paivio's **Dual Coding Theory** proposes that information is processed through two interconnected cognitive systems: a **verbal system**, which processes linguistic information, and a **non-verbal system**, which processes images, sounds, and other sensory stimuli (Paivio, 1986). Learning becomes more effective when both systems are activated simultaneously, as this strengthens memory encoding, comprehension, and long-term retention. The integration of verbal and non-verbal cues therefore enhances learners' ability to recall and apply newly acquired knowledge.

In second and foreign language learning, songs exemplify dual coding by combining lyrics with rhythm, melody, and auditory patterns. This multimodal presentation reinforces vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation while facilitating listening comprehension and language recall (Ludke et al., 2014). The repetitive nature of songs further consolidates linguistic input, enabling learners to retain language more effectively through repeated exposure. Consequently, Dual Coding Theory provides a strong cognitive explanation for the effectiveness of songs as instructional resources, highlighting their capacity to promote meaningful learning, memory enhancement, and communicative competence in language education.

3.6 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge by connecting new information with their prior experiences through meaningful engagement and reflection (Bruner, 1996). Rather than passively receiving information, learners develop understanding through exploration, interaction, and problem-solving in authentic learning environments. This learner-centered perspective emphasizes active participation and contextualized learning as essential components of effective language acquisition.

In second and foreign language education, songs provide authentic and meaningful contexts that enable learners to construct linguistic knowledge through listening, interpretation, discussion, and creative language activities. By analyzing song lyrics, identifying vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and expressing personal interpretations, learners actively engage in the learning process while developing communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Songs also encourage collaborative learning and critical thinking, allowing learners to relate language to cultural experiences and real-life situations. Consequently, Constructivist Learning Theory supports the integration of songs as interactive instructional resources that foster meaningful learning, learner autonomy, and long-term language retention in second and foreign language classrooms.

3.7 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes the development of communicative competence through meaningful interaction and the authentic use of language rather than the memorization of grammatical rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The approach encourages learners to use language for real-life communication by engaging in activities that promote fluency, collaboration, and functional language use. Authentic instructional materials are central to CLT because they expose learners to natural language and culturally relevant contexts.

Songs align closely with the principles of CLT by providing authentic linguistic input that reflects everyday language, idiomatic expressions, and cultural practices. Classroom activities such as singing, lyric analysis, role-playing, discussions, and information-gap tasks encourage learners to communicate, negotiate meaning, and develop listening and speaking skills in meaningful contexts (Littlewood, 2014). Moreover, songs promote learner engagement, confidence, and intercultural awareness by integrating language with music and culture. Therefore, CLT offers a strong pedagogical foundation for incorporating songs as authentic, interactive, and communicative resources in second and foreign language education.

4. Theoretical Analysis

4.1 Songs as Authentic Language Input

Songs serve as authentic language input by exposing learners to naturally occurring vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation patterns, and real-life expressions commonly used by native speakers. Unlike textbook-based materials, songs present language in meaningful communicative contexts, enabling learners to experience how words and phrases are used in everyday interactions (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Authentic songs also introduce idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and cultural references, thereby enriching learners' linguistic and intercultural competence (Murphey, 1992). The combination of melody, rhythm, and repetition enhances learners' ability to comprehend, retain, and reproduce linguistic forms while facilitating implicit language acquisition through repeated exposure (Krashen, 1985). Furthermore, songs provide comprehensible input that encourages learners to infer meaning from contextual cues rather than relying solely on explicit instruction. Consequently, the use of songs as authentic instructional materials creates engaging and meaningful learning experiences that promote communicative competence, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency in second and foreign language classrooms (Engh, 2013).

4.2 Songs and Linguistic Development

Songs contribute significantly to the development of linguistic competence by enhancing learners' vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through authentic and meaningful language exposure. Vocabulary acquisition is strengthened as learners encounter new lexical items, collocations, and idiomatic expressions within memorable and contextualized lyrics, facilitating long-term retention (Medina, 1993). Similarly, songs reinforce grammatical structures by presenting language patterns in natural contexts, enabling learners to acquire grammar implicitly through repeated listening and singing rather than through isolated rule memorization (Murphey, 1992).

Songs also support pronunciation development by exposing learners to authentic models of stress, rhythm, intonation, connected speech, and phonological features of the target language (Ludke et al., 2014). Listening comprehension improves as learners become accustomed to recognizing spoken language, identifying key information, and interpreting meaning from authentic audio input. Moreover, singing and lyric-based discussions encourage learners to practice speaking in a low-anxiety environment, thereby improving fluency, pronunciation, and communicative confidence (Engh, 2013).

Reading skills are developed through the interpretation and analysis of song lyrics, enabling learners to identify vocabulary, infer meaning from context, and understand discourse structures. Likewise, writing skills can be enhanced through activities such as lyric summarization, creative writing, reflective responses, and lyric reconstruction, which encourage learners to apply newly acquired language in meaningful contexts (Lems, 2018). Collectively, these language-learning opportunities demonstrate that songs function as authentic, multimodal instructional resources that integrate receptive and productive language skills. Consequently, song-based instruction promotes holistic linguistic development while fostering communicative competence and learner engagement in second and foreign language education.

4.3 Cognitive Contributions

Songs contribute significantly to the cognitive dimensions of second and foreign language learning by enhancing memory retention, attention, information processing, and overall cognitive engagement. From the perspective of **Dual Coding Theory**, the integration of verbal information with melody, rhythm, and auditory stimuli activates both verbal and non-verbal cognitive systems, leading to stronger encoding and long-term retention of linguistic information (Paivio, 1986). The repetitive nature of songs reinforces vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation patterns, facilitating efficient recall and reducing cognitive load during language processing.

Songs also improve learners' attention by presenting language in an engaging and enjoyable format that sustains concentration and encourages active participation (Engh, 2013). Musical rhythm and repetition help learners identify language patterns, process information more effectively, and retrieve previously acquired knowledge during communication (Ludke et al.,

2014). Furthermore, lyric-based activities such as interpretation, sequencing, and summarization promote higher-order cognitive skills, including analysis, inference, and critical thinking. These activities require learners to actively process linguistic input, connect new knowledge with prior experiences, and apply language meaningfully. Consequently, songs serve as powerful cognitive tools that facilitate deeper language processing, improve memory retention, and support meaningful second and foreign language acquisition.

4.4 Affective Contributions

The affective dimension of language learning plays a crucial role in determining learners' willingness and ability to acquire a second or foreign language. Songs contribute positively to this dimension by enhancing motivation, emotional engagement, self-confidence, and reducing language anxiety. According to Krashen's **Affective Filter Hypothesis**, learners acquire language more effectively when emotional barriers such as fear, stress, and anxiety are minimized (Krashen, 1985). Songs create a relaxed, enjoyable, and supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages learners to participate actively without fear of making mistakes.

The emotional appeal of music increases learners' intrinsic motivation and sustains their interest in language learning activities (Engh, 2013). Melody, rhythm, and meaningful lyrics stimulate positive emotions, making learning experiences more memorable and enjoyable. Furthermore, repeated singing and collaborative musical activities improve learners' confidence in using the target language by providing opportunities for pronunciation practice, oral expression, and peer interaction in a low-pressure environment (Murphey, 1992). These experiences foster a positive attitude toward language learning and encourage greater classroom participation. Consequently, songs function as effective affective tools that promote emotional well-being, increase learner engagement, and create optimal conditions for successful second and foreign language acquisition.

4.5 Sociocultural Contributions

Songs make significant sociocultural contributions to second and foreign language learning by providing authentic insights into the cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and everyday practices of target-language communities. According to Vygotsky's **Sociocultural Theory**, language development is a socially mediated process in which learning occurs through interaction, collaboration, and engagement within meaningful cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Songs embody these principles by exposing learners to authentic language use while simultaneously reflecting the historical, social, and cultural dimensions of the target language.

Through song lyrics, learners encounter idiomatic expressions, cultural references, social norms, and diverse perspectives that are often absent from conventional textbooks (Murphey, 1992). Classroom activities such as group singing, lyric interpretation, discussions, and collaborative projects encourage learners to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and develop intercultural communicative competence (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). These interactions promote respect for

cultural diversity and foster greater awareness of cultural similarities and differences. Furthermore, songs encourage learners to connect linguistic knowledge with real-world communication, strengthening both social interaction and communicative competence. Consequently, the integration of songs into language instruction enhances sociocultural understanding, intercultural sensitivity, and authentic language use, contributing to more meaningful and holistic second and foreign language learning experiences.

5. Pedagogical Implications

The theoretical synthesis presented in this study demonstrates that songs are not merely supplementary classroom resources but effective pedagogical tools capable of enhancing linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural aspects of second and foreign language learning. Consequently, their integration into language education has important implications for language teachers, curriculum developers, and teacher education programs.

5.1 Implications for Language Teachers

Language teachers should adopt a systematic approach when selecting songs to ensure alignment with learners' proficiency levels, instructional objectives, and cultural backgrounds. Appropriate songs should contain comprehensible language, authentic vocabulary, meaningful grammatical structures, clear pronunciation, and culturally appropriate content (Murphey, 1992). Teachers should also consider learners' age, interests, and learning needs to maximize engagement and motivation.

Effective classroom integration requires songs to be embedded within communicative and learner-centered activities rather than used solely for entertainment. Pre-listening activities may activate background knowledge and introduce key vocabulary, while during-listening tasks can focus on comprehension, pronunciation, and language awareness. Post-listening activities, including lyric analysis, discussions, role-plays, presentations, creative writing, and collaborative projects, provide opportunities for learners to apply language in meaningful contexts and develop communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

5.2 Implications for Curriculum Developers

Curriculum developers should recognize songs as authentic instructional resources and incorporate them systematically into language curricula. Music-integrated curriculum design should align songs with specific learning outcomes, including vocabulary development, grammar acquisition, pronunciation practice, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading, writing, and intercultural competence. Furthermore, instructional materials should include carefully designed learning tasks, assessment activities, and teacher guidelines that facilitate the effective pedagogical use of songs across different educational levels (Lems, 2018).

5.3 Implications for Teacher Education

Teacher education programs should provide professional development opportunities that equip educators with the knowledge and skills required to implement music-assisted language teaching effectively. Training should focus on selecting suitable songs, designing communicative learning activities, integrating music with contemporary language teaching methodologies, and assessing learning outcomes. In addition, educators should be encouraged to utilize technology-enhanced learning environments, including digital music platforms, streaming services, lyric-based applications, interactive multimedia resources, and learning management systems. These technologies enable personalized learning experiences, increase learner engagement, and support both classroom-based and online language instruction (Fonseca-Mora & Herrero-Machancoses, 2016).

Overall, the pedagogical integration of songs provides a learner-centered and evidence-informed approach to language education. By combining authentic language input with meaningful communication, emotional engagement, and cultural learning, songs contribute to the development of communicative competence and lifelong language learning skills.

6. Challenges and Considerations

Despite the pedagogical benefits of songs in second and foreign language education, several challenges should be considered to ensure their effective implementation. One major concern is **cultural appropriateness**, as some songs may contain themes, values, or references that are unsuitable for particular educational settings or learner groups (Lems, 2018). Teachers must also evaluate the **linguistic complexity** of songs, including vocabulary difficulty, speech rate, and grammatical structures, to ensure alignment with learners' proficiency levels. Additionally, the frequent use of **slang, idiomatic expressions, and colloquial language** may create comprehension difficulties for beginners if not adequately supported through instructional scaffolding (Murphey, 1992).

Ethical and legal issues related to **copyright and the responsible use of musical materials** should also be observed when incorporating songs into classroom instruction. Furthermore, **learner diversity** requires teachers to accommodate differences in language proficiency, learning preferences, cultural backgrounds, and musical interests. Effective implementation therefore depends on **teacher preparedness**, including the ability to select appropriate songs, design meaningful learning activities, and integrate technology effectively. Finally, educators should employ valid **assessment strategies** that evaluate not only linguistic achievement but also learners' communicative competence, engagement, and intercultural understanding (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

7. Proposed Conceptual Framework

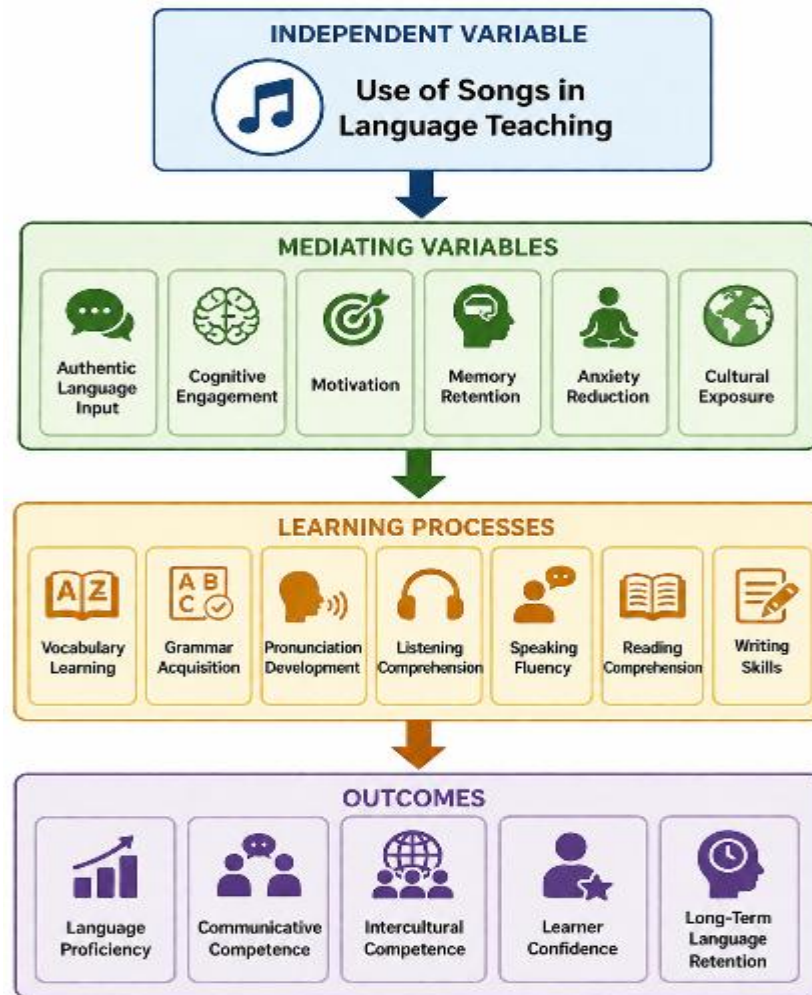
The proposed conceptual framework explains the multidimensional role of songs in second and foreign language teaching by integrating theoretical perspectives from second language acquisition, educational psychology, and communicative language teaching. The framework identifies the **use of songs in language teaching** as the **independent variable**, serving as the primary instructional strategy that provides learners with authentic, meaningful, and engaging language input. Songs expose learners to natural vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and cultural contexts, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful language acquisition.

The effectiveness of song-based instruction is influenced by several **mediating variables**, including authentic language input, cognitive engagement, motivation, memory retention, anxiety reduction, and cultural exposure. These factors facilitate learners' active participation, enhance information processing, strengthen long-term memory, and create a positive emotional environment that supports language acquisition (Krashen, 1985; Paivio, 1986). Furthermore, authentic cultural content embedded in songs promotes intercultural understanding and meaningful communication.

These mediating variables subsequently influence key **language learning processes**, including vocabulary learning, grammar acquisition, pronunciation development, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Through repeated exposure, interaction, and contextualized learning, songs support both receptive and productive language development.

Ultimately, the framework proposes that effective integration of songs leads to improved **language proficiency, communicative competence, intercultural competence, learner confidence, and long-term language retention**. By synthesizing linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural perspectives, this conceptual framework provides a comprehensive theoretical model for understanding how songs contribute to successful second and foreign language learning. It also offers a valuable foundation for future empirical research and evidence-based pedagogical practices in language education.

Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Songs in Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning.



Source: Author's Own Framework

8. Conclusion

This theoretical study has examined the pedagogical role of songs in second and foreign language teaching and learning by synthesizing major theories from second language acquisition, educational psychology, cognitive science, and communicative language teaching. The review demonstrates that songs are far more than supplementary classroom resources; they constitute authentic, multimodal instructional materials that support language learning through interconnected linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural processes. By integrating rhythm, melody, meaningful language input, and cultural content, songs create engaging learning environments that facilitate the development of communicative competence and overall language proficiency.

The analysis of the theoretical foundations indicates that Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis explain how songs provide comprehensible input while reducing learners' anxiety and enhancing motivation (Krashen, 1985). Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning and authentic social interaction, whereas Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory highlights the role of musical intelligence in supporting diverse learning styles (Gardner, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory demonstrate how the integration of verbal and auditory stimuli promotes memory retention, meaningful learning, and active knowledge construction (Bruner, 1996; Paivio, 1986). These theoretical perspectives collectively provide a comprehensive explanation for the effectiveness of songs in language education.

The study also highlights that songs contribute to the development of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while fostering learner motivation, confidence, intercultural awareness, and long-term language retention. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of song-based instruction requires careful consideration of factors such as cultural appropriateness, linguistic complexity, learner diversity, teacher preparedness, and ethical use of copyrighted materials. These considerations underscore the need for thoughtful instructional planning to maximize the educational value of songs in diverse learning contexts.

A major contribution of this study is the development of an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes multiple theoretical perspectives into a unified explanation of music-assisted language learning. This framework offers a coherent foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which songs facilitate second and foreign language acquisition and provides practical guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and teacher educators. It also addresses the fragmented nature of previous theoretical discussions by bringing together complementary perspectives within a single model.

Future research should empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework across different educational settings, learner populations, age groups, and target languages. Longitudinal and mixed-methods studies may further examine how song-based instruction influences language achievement, learner engagement, and intercultural competence over time. Overall, the findings affirm that the systematic integration of songs into second and foreign language education represents an evidence-informed, learner-centered, and pedagogically robust approach that can enrich language learning experiences and contribute to more effective and meaningful language acquisition.

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