



M.PHIL THESIS IN LINGUISTICS

The Significance of Music in Teaching English Verb Forms to  
Learners of English as a Second Language



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## **Abstract**

Today, most of the ESL learners in Sri Lanka consider English language learning as anxiety packed, insipid and an unconquerable obstacle. As a facilitator in ELT (English Language Teaching) the researcher has experienced the negative responses of the students in terms of learning English grammar in ESL classrooms. Most of the students find English verb forms as a difficult grammar section to be mastered in ESL classrooms. They tend to do many grammatical errors in their writings with specific reference to primary helping verbs and main verbs. Moreover, Karunaratna (1993) has mentioned that the methods employed by the facilitator have not been successful at improving English proficiency of ESL learners. Especially, when teaching English verb forms most of the facilitators have used the same old chalk and talk method. If facilitators can integrate music into ELT (English Language Teaching), the ELT sessions can be converted into a stress free, learner friendly atmosphere. This study attempts to investigate whether songs and background music can be implemented in teaching English verb forms. The sample of this study consists of 80 students from the Faculty of Management studies and Commerce of University of Sri Jayewardenepura. A pretest was administered to test their prior knowledge in English verb forms. After that, the selected sample was randomly divided into two groups. The control group was taught English verb forms in a traditional classroom setting whereas the experimental group was exposed to a teaching session of English verb forms using English songs and background music. Later on, the first test instrument, a posttest on English verb forms was administered to assess the proficiency level of the students after getting them exposed to two different types of treatment. Then, the second test instrument, a likert type scale questionnaire was distributed to assess the feelings and attitudes of the students about

the English class. Finally, the third test instrument, delayed posttest was administered to assess the memory retention of ESL learners. SPSS data package was used to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaires. The results of the posttest showcased that, the students of the control group outperformed the experimental group in terms of the proficiency level obtained at the posttest. Furthermore, the students of the experimental group claimed that the use of songs and background music in the classroom has turned the classroom into an enjoyable and relaxing setting where the students' interest, self-confidence and motivation towards learning English verb forms have achieved an immense growth. The results of the delayed posttest depicted that songs and background music have been a positive factor to increase the memory retention of the students. Even though, the combination of songs and background music negatively affected the acquisition of English verb forms the application of songs and background music in the classroom has increased the motivation level, entertainment and self-confidence of ESL learners and positively affects the memory retention of the targeted population. In conclusion, it is clearly evident that the use of English songs and background music in ESL classrooms has not been a supportive tool to teach English verb forms.

**Key words:** ELT, ESL, Music, Posttest, Pretest