



Sing Your Way to Better Reading: Using Song Lyrics for Fluency and Comprehension

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To cite this paper:

Bouguebs, R. (2023). Sing Your Way to Better Reading: Using Song Lyrics for Fluency and Comprehension. *International Journal of Multilingualism and Languages for Specific Purposes*, 5(2), 82-101.

Received: 01/06/2023; **Accepted:** 12/09/2023, **Published:** 31/12/2023

Abstract: Reading is a complex cognitive process that integrates diverse linguistic and cognitive skills, including background knowledge activation, phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and vocabulary knowledge. Central to this process is reading fluency—the ability to read text smoothly, accurately, and expressively—which serves as the bridge between basic word recognition and higher-order comprehension. Fluency is multidimensional, encompassing three critical components: accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Effective reading instruction must address these dimensions simultaneously to facilitate the transition from laborious decoding to fluent, meaningful reading. Recent research underscores the importance of repeated exposure to print in fostering fluency development, particularly through methods such as repeated reading. This paper explores the innovative use of song lyrics as an engaging medium for enhancing reading fluency, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Grounded in theoretical frameworks such as LaBerge and Samuels' Automaticity Theory (1974) and supported by empirical studies, this investigation examines how fluency instruction, when integrated with music, can motivate learners, improve decoding skills, and foster deeper comprehension. Song lyrics, due to their natural rhythm, repetition, and emotional impact, enable learners to experience a multisensory learning environment that supports constructivist learning theories. By utilising the natural prosody of songs, educators can help students internalize the flow of language, practice expressive reading, and develop a lifelong love of reading. The implications of this approach are significant, particularly for EFL learners who often struggle with pronunciation and comprehension. Song lyrics integration into fluency instruction enhances cognitive skills and addresses other metacognitive dimensions,

such as motivation and confidence, making the learning process more enjoyable and inclusive. This paper concludes with actionable recommendations for educators, including strategies for selecting appropriate texts, incorporating multimedia resources, and fostering classroom discussions. By incorporating song lyrics, educators can transform traditional reading instruction into an engaging reading practice that enhances both fluency and comprehension.

Keywords: *Reading Fluency; Fluency Instruction; Song Lyrics; Automaticity; Prosody; Repeated Reading*

1. Introduction

Fluency has long been recognized as a cornerstone of reading proficiency, playing a pivotal role in bridging word recognition and comprehension. Historically, research on reading fluency dates to the late nineteenth century, with early studies focusing on the psychological processes underlying efficient reading. Edmund Huey (1905), in his seminal work “The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading”, emphasized the importance of reducing decoding time to free cognitive resources for comprehension. This foundational insight laid the groundwork for later theories, such as Laberge and Samuels’ Automaticity Theory (1974), which posits that readers must process words automatically to allocate cognitive attention to constructing meaning.

In the mid-twentieth century, the advent of silent reading practices temporarily shifted the focus away from oral reading fluency. However, the subsequent revival of oral reading practices renewed interest in fluency development, underscoring its critical role in literacy education. Scholars such as Rasinski (2003, 2006) have since advocated for fluency-based instruction that incorporates modeling, repetition, and guided practice to support learners in achieving automaticity and prosody. These instructional methods not only enhance fluency but also foster deeper engagement with text.

In contemporary EFL classrooms, where students often face unique challenges in decoding, pronunciation, and comprehension, selecting appropriate texts for fluency instruction is paramount. Traditional texts may fail to fully engage learners, whereas alternative genres such as poetry and song lyrics offer promising opportunities. Song lyrics, in particular, are characterized by their natural rhythm, repetition, and emotional resonance, making them an ideal medium for fluency practice. By transforming reading from a mechanical task into an enjoyable and memorable experience, song lyrics not only enhance fluency but also promote deeper engagement and comprehension. This paper advocates for the strategic integration of song lyrics into fluency-based instruction, highlighting their potential



to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of literacy development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Multidimensional Nature of Fluency

Fluency is not a singular skill but rather a dynamic interplay of multiple components that work in concert to facilitate effective reading. Allington (2006) emphasizes that fluent reading is characterized by the ability to read in meaningful phrases with appropriate intonation and prosody, aligning with constructivist learning theories that advocate for active, student-centered approaches to literacy instruction. This holistic perspective underscores the importance of addressing accuracy, automaticity, and prosody simultaneously in fluency instruction. By integrating song lyrics into fluency-based instruction, educators can create a multisensory learning experience that supports the development of these interconnected dimensions.

2.2 Defining Reading Fluency

Despite its presence in educational research since the 19th century, reading fluency remains a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with no agreed-on definition. Rasinski (2006a) highlights this definitional ambiguity, noting that researchers have approached fluency from three distinct perspectives:

2.2.1 First Perspective: Oral Reading and Prosody

From this perspective, reading fluency is viewed as an oral reading phenomenon where the written text mirrors the natural characteristics of spoken language. Rasinski (2004) argues that fluency in speech and reading share common features, such as word accuracy, appropriate speed, and expressive intonation. Richards (2000) further elaborates that fluent readers project the natural pitch, stress, and juncture of spoken language onto written text, facilitating comprehension for both the reader and the listener.

2.2.2 Second Perspective: Accuracy and Automaticity

A second view defines reading fluency in terms of accurate and rapid word recognition, emphasizing the role of automaticity in decoding. Influenced by LaBerge and Samuels' Automaticity Theory (1974), Shanahan (2006) describes fluency as "the ability to read texts aloud with sufficient speed and accuracy." Pikulski and Chard (2003) add that automatic word recognition allows readers to



allocate cognitive resources toward constructing meaning, underscoring the reciprocal relationship between decoding and comprehension.

2.2.3 Third Perspective: Comprehension and Simultaneous Processing

The third perspective integrates decoding and comprehension, defining fluency as the ability to decode and comprehend simultaneously. Samuels (2006r) asserts that the essence of fluency lies not in speed or prosody alone but in the reader's capacity to decode and understand text concurrently. This definition synthesizes elements of the previous two perspectives, highlighting fluency as a developmental process that encompasses efficient decoding, effective prosody, and meaningful comprehension.

Building on these definitions, Nation (2009) and Kuhn et al. (2010) propose a comprehensive framework for reading fluency, identifying three primary components:

- *Word Accuracy*

Accuracy or the correct recognition (identification) of words during the reading task is almost an important characteristic of a fluent reader. Hudson et al (2005) define word reading accuracy as "the reader's ability to recognize or decode words correctly" (2005, p. 703). In their explanation to the role of accuracy in a successful reading comprehension, they see that it is the accurate recognition of words that would facilitate the reader's understanding and correct interpretation of what is being read. An inaccurate word recognition or poor reading accuracy, then, would have a negative influence on reading comprehension and fluency. They argue that inaccurate word recognition may lead to the misinterpretation of what is being read.

- *Automaticity*

Fluent decoding depends on the readers' ability to achieve what reading specialists call "automaticity" or the accurate and rapid word recognition (Samuels, 1979; Shanahan, 2006). According to these reading specialists, a fluent reader is someone who manipulates the speed of reading; generally, he reads at a conversational rate. Hudson et al (2005, p. 702) assume that reading rate is a prerequisite for good comprehension. They consider that the speed with which the information is processed in the working memory will affect the speed of reconstructing the meaning of text. Reading rate is not only acknowledged as an integral component of effective and efficient reading, it also reaches the extent of representing an accurate measure of reading fluency. Deno (1982) compares oral



reading rate to a thermometer that can be used to measure the current temperature and ongoing changes of the oral reading performance. (Deno, 1982 In. Hudson et al, 2005) The rapid and effortless processing of words, enabling readers to focus on meaning construction.

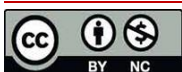
- *Prosody*

Prosody or reading with expression is the third key element of fluent reading. Prosody as stated by Hudson is a linguistic term that describes the rhythmic and the tonal aspects of speech. Simply, it refers to the music of oral language (Hudson et al, 2005, p. 704). Prosody is the ability to project the tonal aspect of speech onto print so that the reader's reading sounds natural as if he is speaking. So, what are these prosodic features? They refer to the variations in pitch (intonation), stress pattern, and duration. All of them constitute the prosodic features that contribute to the expressive reading of a text. An expressive reading, argues Richards (2000), is mainly based on how the reader projects those rules of oral speech on a written passage, so that the reader's reading sounds natural as if he is speaking. Hudson et al (2005) further explain that these features are mainly applied when the reader faces questions, surprises, exclamations and other meanings. In these situations the reader must use these combinations of pitch, duration, and stress pattern because of their importance in manifesting his understanding of the writer's message. In other words, when readers embed appropriate volume, tone, emphasis, phrasing, and other elements in oral expression, argues Rasinski (2004, p. 4), they are giving evidence that the reader is actively interpreting or constructing meaning from the passage.

These dimensions work synergistically to allocate cognitive resources efficiently, shifting the focus from laborious word recognition to deeper comprehension. Fluent readers demonstrate the ability to group words into meaningful phrases, read at a conversational rate, and engage in continuous self-monitoring to construct coherent mental models of the text.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinnings: Automaticity and the Repeated Reading Paradigm

The theoretical foundation for reading fluency can be traced back to Edmund Huey's seminal work, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* (1905), which provided early psychological insights into fluency development. Huey emphasized the importance of reducing decoding time to free cognitive resources for comprehension, laying the groundwork for later theories in the field. However, it was not until the publication of LaBerge and Samuels' Automaticity Theory in 1974



that fluency research gained significant traction. This theory posits that repeated exposure to the same text is essential for achieving fluency, as it reduces cognitive load and enhances decoding efficiency, thereby freeing cognitive resources for comprehension.

2.3.1 Repeated Reading as a Method for Developing Automaticity

Repeated Reading, introduced by Samuels (1979), is an instructional method rooted in the principles of automaticity theory. The method draws parallels between acquiring fluency in reading and mastering other complex skills, such as playing music or learning a sport. For example, musicians achieve proficiency by practicing the same piece repeatedly until they can perform it effortlessly. Similarly, in Repeated Reading, students engage with the same passage multiple times until they reach a satisfactory level of fluency. As Samuels (1997) explains, "The method consists of rereading a short, meaningful passage several times until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached. Then the procedure is repeated with a new passage" (p. 379).

The main assumption of this strategy is that instead of exposing students to new texts daily, a more effective approach to building fluency involves repeated practice with the same passage until a predetermined fluency criterion is achieved. These criteria are typically aligned with grade-level standards, ensuring that students meet specific benchmarks before progressing to more challenging material.

2.3.2 Key Benefits of Repeated Reading

The benefits of repeated reading extend beyond mere familiarity with the text, as it addresses critical components of fluent reading, including decoding efficiency, comprehension, and prosody. The key advantages of this reading practice are as follows:

- Repeated reading reduces the reader's decoding effort, as the core principle of the method "is to develop the reader's automatic word recognition" (Bouguebs, 2018, p. 98). When readers encounter words multiple times, their cognitive load decreases, enabling them to decode more efficiently. This reduction in effort allows the reader to process the text automatically, freeing up his cognitive resources for higher-level comprehension tasks by multiplying his exposure to the print.
- Repeated reading significantly enhances comprehension by allowing readers to transition from decoding to deeper meaning-making. As Bouguebs (2018) explains, "With a multiple exposure to the same orthographic patterns, the cognitive focus of the reader is allowed to shift



from decoding and encoding to meaning-making” (pp. 98-99). By reducing the cognitive load associated with decoding, readers can allocate more attention to interpreting and understanding the text.

- Repeated reading improves reading expressiveness. With increased familiarity, readers can focus on prosodic features such as stress, intonation, and phrasing, contributing to effective oral reading. Expressive interpretation is a hallmark of fluent reading and plays a critical role in conveying the emotional tone and authorial intent of the text.

Empirical studies consistently support the efficacy of repeated reading in improving both fluency and comprehension. For example, Rasinski (2003) highlights how repeated reading fosters automaticity and prosody, enabling readers to engage more deeply with the text. Similarly, Hudson et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of prosodic reading in constructing meaning, arguing that expressive interpretation is essential for fluent reading.

2.3.3 The Role of Prosody in Fluency Development

Prosody, often overlooked in traditional fluency instruction, plays a crucial role in reading development. It reflects the reader’s ability to project the tonal aspects of speech onto print, making oral reading sound natural and expressive. Osborn and Lehr (2003) identify key elements of prosodic reading, including stress, pitch variations, intonation, rate, and pausing. These features not only enhance fluency but also contribute to comprehension by signaling syntactic and semantic relationships within the text.

For EFL learners, prosody presents unique challenges due to differences in phonological systems and stress patterns between languages. Song lyrics, with their inherent rhythmic and melodic qualities, provide an ideal medium for practicing prosodic reading. By engaging with songs, learners can internalize the natural flow of language, improving both their fluency and pronunciation. Additionally, the repetitive nature of songs reinforces prosodic features, helping learners develop a more expressive and natural reading style.

3. Fluency-Based Instruction: Integrating Accuracy, Automaticity, and Prosody

LaBerge and Samuels’ Automaticity Theory (1974) underscores the importance of extensive exposure to print as a means of developing automatic word recognition. Increased exposure to print helps readers develop familiarity with orthographic patterns, leading to the growth of accurate and automatic word



recognition. This, in turn, frees cognitive resources for generating meaning from the text. However, fluency instruction cannot focus solely on accuracy and automaticity; prosody must also be addressed to ensure comprehensive fluency development.

Prosody, or reading with expression, is a critical indicator of fluency. Allington (2006) and Schreiber (1980) argue that prosody is essential for comprehension, as it conveys the text's emotional tone and syntactic structure. Like automaticity, prosody flourishes through repeated exposure to print, as suggested by Schreiber's Prosody Theory (1980). Effective fluency training targets all three components—accuracy, automaticity, and prosody—simultaneously, ensuring equal importance is given to all fluency components during instruction and assessment.

Rasinski (2006) emphasizes that while integrating these three components may seem challenging, it is entirely achievable with careful planning. He postulates that no fluency instruction is efficient unless all three components are addressed. Thus, teachers must strive to create lessons where accuracy, automaticity, and prosody occur in unison, providing a balanced approach to fluency development.

In addition to increasing exposure to print and addressing the three components of fluency, studies also highlight the importance of modeling, repetition, and tutoring in fluency instruction. Schwanenflugel (2008) notes that teachers can help students become more fluent readers by providing models of fluent reading and guiding students through repeated readings with corrective feedback. These steps—modeling, repetition, and tutoring—have long been recognized as essential components of effective fluency instruction, regardless of the specific strategy employed.

3.1 Characteristics of Texts for Fluency Practice

Fluency develops most effectively when students have ample opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success. One of the tutor's primary roles during fluency practice is selecting appropriate materials. According to Rasinski and his associates (2008), several factors contribute to matching suitable materials for fluency practice, including the type of text, its level of difficulty, and its length.

3.1.1 The Text Type

Not all texts are equally suited for fluency practice. Certain genres lend themselves more readily to oral performance and interpretation. Rasinski et al. (2008) summarize the characteristics of these texts as follows:



Poetry, songs and song lyrics, rhetoric, plays (usually in the form of readers' theater scripts), and other texts written with a sense of the author's voice are among the texts that we find lend themselves most fittingly to fluency instruction. Not only can these texts be read orally and repeatedly, they also lend themselves to oral interpretation. (p. 11)

Texts that best support fluency development are those that allow readers to recreate the author's voice during practice. Through these materials, students can use appropriate expressions to convey the author's main ideas and emotions. Informational texts, which are often less conducive to expressive renderings, are less suitable for fluency practice. Instead, narrative texts, poetry, rhymes, scripts, dialogues, and similar genres are preferred, as they are typically written with a distinct voice that encourages expressive reading.

4. Song Lyrics in Fluency Instruction

One of the persistent challenges in literacy education is students' reluctance to engage with traditional reading materials such as books and articles. This lack of interest often results in poor performance on reading assessments, posing a significant concern for educators striving to improve comprehension skills (Suseno, 2018). Traditional reading practices may fail to resonate with students' interests, leading to disengagement. To address this issue, innovative strategies that align with students' preferences are essential. The integration of song lyrics into reading instruction offers a promising solution, leveraging students' natural affinity for music to foster a love for reading.

Song lyrics are uniquely suited for repeated reading and oral performance due to their rhythmic, repetitive, and emotionally engaging nature. Empirical studies provide compelling evidence of their effectiveness in enhancing fluency, comprehension, and motivation among learners, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Below is an expanded synthesis of key findings from the literature, highlighting the pedagogical potential of song lyrics in fluency instruction.

4.1 Role of Music and Lyrics in Enhancing Reading Skills

Music is an integral part of daily life, and many students enjoy listening to songs. By incorporating song lyrics into reading practices, educators can tap into students' existing interests, making reading more enjoyable and accessible. The act of reading lyrics serves as a form of extensive reading, which has been shown to



improve comprehension skills (Suseno, 2018). Furthermore, the repetitive structure of songs reinforces word recognition and decoding, while the emotional engagement associated with music enhances motivation and retention.

Regular exposure to song lyrics also helps students gradually develop their ability to comprehend various types of texts. Analyzing and discussing song lyrics not only makes reading more enjoyable but also strengthens students' capacity to interpret themes, messages, and literary devices. Over time, this practice can lead to improved overall reading competence and a more positive attitude toward reading (Suseno, 2018).

4.2 Key Findings from Empirical Studies

The integration of song lyrics into reading instruction has garnered significant attention in educational research due to its potential to enhance literacy development, particularly in the area of reading fluency. Music, with its rhythmic and melodic qualities, shares structural and cognitive parallels with language, making it a natural ally in fostering reading skills. Several empirical studies demonstrate the efficacy of using song lyrics in fluency instruction, highlighting their ability to engage learners, improve foundational reading skills, and address diverse learning needs. From early education settings to interventions for struggling readers, these studies underscore the versatility and effectiveness of music-based approaches in promoting literacy.

First, Butzlaff (2000) identifies a notable link between music and written language, emphasizing that both use formal notation systems read sequentially from left to right. This structural similarity suggests that learning to read music may support the development of linguistic reading skills in early readers. Butzlaff's (2000) study shows that incorporating music into reading instruction can be a highly effective educational approach. By leveraging the natural connections between music and reading, educators can enhance foundational literacy skills, especially in early education settings where these skills are initially developed.

Next, Patel and Laud (2007) investigated the use of songs in classroom instruction and found that integrating music fostered an environment filled with excitement and familiarity. This approach is proved effective in increasing students' engagement in reading activities, leading to noticeable improvements in reading performance. The researchers noted that songs bridge the gap between entertainment and education, making learning more enjoyable and less monotonous. By incorporating music, educators were able to enhance fluency while helping students form a deeper connection with the material, thereby enriching the overall learning experience.



In a different research context, Biggs et al. (2008) study highlights the significant impact of using song lyrics to improve reading fluency among struggling middle school readers. By integrating the SingingCoach Software, which enables students to read lyrics while learning to sing, the research demonstrates that this interactive approach not only motivates students but also facilitates consistent practice and self-assessment. Over nine weeks, the treatment group exhibited notable improvements in reading fluency, advancing an entire grade level compared to the control group, which showed no substantial progress. The findings suggest that the rhythm and repetition inherent in song lyrics contribute to better word recognition, comprehension, and overall engagement with reading, thus supporting the use of musical interventions as effective strategies for enhancing literacy skills in adolescents.

Similarly, Iwasaki et al. (2013) emphasized the significance of the melodic structure of songs in promoting prosodic reading skills. The repetitive nature of singing encourages readers to concentrate on key prosodic features, such as stress, intonation, and phrasing. This focus on prosody fosters a natural and expressive reading style, which is essential for effective oral reading and comprehension. The study highlights that song lyrics can serve as a highly effective tool for developing prosodic fluency, particularly among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Germeroth et al.'s (2018) study underscores the significant role of music and technology in enhancing reading fluency through a program called Lyrics2Learn (L2L). The findings demonstrate that students who engaged in repeated readings of song lyrics exhibited notable improvements in fluency compared to those practicing with traditional texts. This approach not only fostered fluency development but also leveraged the engaging nature of music to cultivate a more positive attitude toward reading. As a result, students were more motivated to participate in fluency-building activities, highlighting the potential of integrating music into literacy instruction.

4.3 Research Gap and Methodological Insights

Although there is growing evidence supporting the use of song lyrics in fluency instruction, significant gaps remain in understanding their full potential. Many studies have focused on small-scale interventions or specific populations, leaving broader questions about scalability, long-term effects, and applicability across diverse learner groups largely unanswered. For instance, Germeroth et al.'s (2018) study that examined the impact of the Lyrics2Learn (L2L) program on reading fluency, despite the notable improvements in fluency among participants, teachers encountered challenges in implementing it consistently and faithfully, highlighting the need for further exploration of implementation fidelity. These tools



offer tailored learning experiences that can adapt to students' unique needs, making them particularly promising for fostering fluency development. However, additional research is necessary to evaluate their effectiveness across varied educational contexts and over extended periods. Such investigations could provide deeper insights into the scalability and sustainability of these approaches, ensuring their benefits are maximized for a wider range of learners.

These gaps highlight the importance of combining music, technology, and innovative instructional strategies to create dynamic and inclusive reading environments. Addressing implementation challenges and exploring the broader applicability of song-based fluency programs will be critical to optimizing their impact and fostering lasting literacy development. By focusing on these areas, future research can help refine and expand the use of song lyrics as a transformative tool in reading instruction.

5. Methodology and Instructional Design

5.1 Stages of a Fluency-Based Instruction Lesson

To design an effective oral reading intervention where developing fluency is the objective, teachers must adhere to key principles outlined by Rasinski (2003). These include:

- Teacher modeling of effective oral reading for students;
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to practice in a classroom setting;
- Focusing on appropriate phrasing to complete the process.

By integrating these principles into a structured, multi-stage approach that emphasizes modeling, repetition, guided practice, and progress monitoring, educators can maximize the impact of song lyrics in fluency instruction.

5.1.1 Modeling

Modeling plays a crucial role in helping students develop an awareness of what fluency entails. As Morgan (2013) asserts, the best way to achieve this goal is not just through words but through demonstrations that highlight attention to phrases and expressive reading. During this stage, the teacher reads the selected song lyrics aloud with fluent delivery, demonstrating appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression. Teachers should emphasize prosodic features such as intonation, phrasing, and pacing to highlight the expressive aspects of fluent reading. This demonstration helps students understand the role fluency plays in comprehension,



as reading in a smooth, effortless, and expressive manner enhances their ability to grasp the meaning of the text.

5.1.2 Repetition

Repetition is essential for reinforcing word recognition, building automaticity, and allowing students to internalize the rhythm and flow of the text. Students engage in repeated readings of the song lyrics, typically completing at least four iterations. This practice aligns with Rasinski's (2003) emphasis on providing multiple opportunities for students to practice in a classroom setting. To accommodate different learning styles and foster collaboration, teachers can vary the practice format by encouraging students to read aloud individually, in pairs, or as a group. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of song lyrics makes them particularly well-suited for this stage, as they naturally support the development of fluency while keeping students engaged.

5.1.3 Tutoring

Guided practice through one-on-one or small-group tutoring sessions ensures personalized support for students. During these sessions, teachers offer corrective feedback and explicit guidance, focusing on areas such as decoding errors, prosodic weaknesses, and comprehension challenges. This step addresses individual needs, making the instruction more inclusive and effective. By providing targeted assistance, teachers help students refine both their technical and expressive reading skills. Tutoring also reinforces the importance of appropriate phrasing, which Rasinski (2003) identifies as a key component of fluency development. Through this focused support, students gain confidence and competence in their reading abilities.

5.1.4 Monitoring Fluency Progress

Continuous assessment is vital for tracking students' progress and informing instruction. Tools such as timed readings, fluency rubrics, and performance checklists can be used to evaluate accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Progress monitoring helps identify individual strengths and areas for improvement, enabling teachers to tailor instruction to meet diverse learner needs. Regular assessments also provide valuable data for adjusting instructional strategies and setting achievable goals. By systematically monitoring fluency progress, educators ensure that students are consistently moving toward mastery of the skills required for effective and expressive reading.



5.2 Selection Criteria for Song Lyrics

When selecting song lyrics for fluency instruction, educators should carefully consider several criteria to ensure the material is both pedagogically sound and engaging, as argued by Germeroth et al. (2018). These criteria aim to maximize the instructional value of the songs while fostering student interest and participation. Key considerations include:

5.2.1 Age Appropriateness

Songs should be suitable for the students' age group, with themes and vocabulary that align with their developmental level. Educators must ensure that the content is neither too advanced nor inappropriate, creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

5.2.2. Thematic Relevance

Select songs that connect to the subjects and topics being taught in the classroom. This alignment reinforces learning and makes the content more relatable, helping students draw meaningful connections between the lyrics and their broader education.

5.2.3. Rhythmic and Rhyming Structure

Opt for songs with a strong rhythmic structure and rhyming patterns. These qualities not only aid in memorization but also make reading practice more enjoyable, as students can naturally internalize the flow and cadence of the language.

5.2.4. Diverse Musical Genres and Themes

Include a variety of musical genres—such as country, R&B, pop, and classic rock—to cater to different student interests. This diversity enhances engagement by allowing students to explore texts that resonate with their personal preferences.

5.2.5. Meaningful Messages or Concepts

Choose songs that convey meaningful messages or teach valuable concepts, such as character-building, social skills, or historical events. Such selections serve a dual purpose, enhancing both reading fluency and content knowledge.



5.2.6. Popularity and Familiarity

Incorporate popular or catchy songs that students are likely to enjoy and want to sing along with. Familiarity with the music can motivate students to engage more deeply with the text, fostering enthusiasm for reading practice.

5.2.7. Simplified Lyrics (if necessary)

If the original lyrics are too complex, educators can simplify them while maintaining their essential rhythm and meaning. This ensures that the material remains accessible to students, allowing them to practice effectively without becoming overwhelmed.

6. Discussion

The integration of song lyrics into fluency instruction represents a paradigm shift from conventional reading practices. Music's inherent rhythm, repetition, and emotional resonance create a multisensory learning experience that enhances both engagement and retention. In EFL classrooms, where learners often face challenges in decoding, pronunciation, and comprehension, song lyrics offer a dynamic tool for bridging the gap between mechanical reading and meaningful understanding.

This approach aligns well with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active, student-centered learning. By incorporating familiar and enjoyable music into lessons, educators can foster a more inclusive and motivating classroom environment. Songs not only improve reading skills but also build learner confidence and cultivate a lifelong love of reading. Furthermore, the emotional connection students form with music can enhance memory retention and deepen comprehension, making this method particularly effective for diverse learners.

The repetitive nature of song lyrics supports automaticity, while their rhythmic and melodic qualities promote prosodic reading. By engaging with songs, students internalize the natural flow of language, improving both fluency and pronunciation. Additionally, the thematic richness of many songs provides opportunities for meaningful discussions, further reinforcing comprehension and critical thinking skills.

7. Recommendations for Educators

To effectively integrate song lyrics into fluency-based instruction and maximize their impact on reading development, educators are encouraged to adopt the following evidence-based strategies:



- Select songs that align with students' interests and instructional goals. Include a variety of genres such as country, R&B, pop, and classic rock to cater to diverse tastes (Kurilin, 2014). For example: Country: "It's a Great Day to Be Alive" by Travis Tritt; R&B/Soul: "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye; Pop: "Keep Your Head Up" by Andy Grammer; Classic Rock: "Let It Be" by The Beatles.
- To support auditory and visual learning, it is recommended to use visual aids such as projected lyrics alongside audio playback channels. Interactive tools like lyric videos or educational apps can further enhance engagement and provide a dynamic learning experience.
- After fluency practice, engage students in discussions about the meaning, themes, and vocabulary of the song lyrics. Encourage critical thinking by connecting the content to real-world issues or broader literary concepts. This transition from fluency practice to comprehension deepens understanding and reinforces the skills developed during reading.
- As emphasized by research, continuous assessment is vital for tracking students' progress and informing instruction (Germeroth et al., 2018; Patel & Laud, 2007). Tools such as timed readings, fluency rubrics, and performance checklists can be used to evaluate accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Progress monitoring helps identify individual strengths and areas for improvement, enabling teachers to tailor instruction to meet diverse learner needs. Regular assessments also provide valuable data for adjusting instructional strategies and setting achievable goals. By systematically monitoring fluency progress, educators ensure that students are consistently moving toward mastery of the skills required for effective and expressive reading.
- Adapt fluency lessons to accommodate varying proficiency levels. Provide additional scaffolding for struggling readers, such as pre-teaching challenging vocabulary or offering guided practice in small groups. For advanced learners, introduce more complex texts or encourage them to analyze the prosodic features of the lyrics in greater depth.
- Incorporate interactive software or apps that synchronize lyrics with music, allowing students to practice reading in a dynamic digital environment. These tools not only make fluency practice more engaging but also provide instant feedback to support skill development.



By implementing these recommendations, educators can create an inclusive and motivating classroom environment that fosters fluency and comprehension as well. The strategic use of song lyrics, combined with systematic assessment and differentiated instruction, empowers students to become confident, proficient readers who are equipped for lifelong learning.

8. Conclusion

The simplicity and joyfulness of integrating song lyrics into the classroom can transform traditional reading instruction. By leveraging the songs' repetitive and melodic nature, educators can help students develop reading fluency, comprehension skills, and an understanding of phonetic patterns, pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm (Ouahmiche, 2012). This multisensory approach not only supports struggling readers but also enriches the linguistic awareness of all learners, fostering both literacy skills and cultural engagement.

As Iwasaki et al. (2013) noted, "The beauty of singing in the classroom is its simplicity and joyfulness. Songs are everywhere. Hence, what could be better; students having fun singing while learning to read at the same time!" (p. 141). This seamless blend of music's universal appeal and essential reading skills creates an engaging, inclusive environment that deepens students' connection to language. With careful planning and implementation, this innovative approach has the potential to revolutionize fluency instruction, empowering students to become confident, lifelong readers.

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Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to the researchers and educators whose work has been cited throughout this paper, particularly Germeroth et al. (2018), Patel and Laud (2007), and Iwasaki et al. (2013). Their empirical findings and theoretical frameworks provided critical support for this investigation. I also extend my appreciation to Alex Kurilin (2014) for his practical recommendations on integrating song lyrics into fluency instruction, which significantly enriched the practical applications of this research.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article.

Ethical approval

This research did not require any ethical approval.

Informed consent

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by the author.



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