

## Songs to support foreign language learning

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Educators often report that songs can be used effectively in foreign language education to support a variety of language skills (Spicher & Sweeney, 2007), yet to date there is little empirical evidence to support such claims (Sposet, 2008). Studies using participants' native language have shown that under certain conditions, verbal learning and verbatim memory for text can be supported by a musical presentation method during the learning process (Thaut *et al.*, 2008; Rainey & Larsen, 2002; Wallace, 1994; Yalch, 1991), although counter-evidence can also be found (Racette & Peretz, 2008; Kilgour, Jakobson, & Cuddy, 2000). Recent experimental research with adults has shown that word boundary learning is greatly improved when listening to a continuous stream of nonsense words which are sung, compared to hearing monotone speech (Schön *et al.*, 2008). Songs can also increase vocabulary learning (Medina, 1990) and improve learners' pronunciation and intonation (prosody) in a new language (Fomina, 2000). In this talk, I will present results from two randomised, experimental studies and quasi-experimental, classroom-based arts intervention studies that examine whether singing can be used in practice as an effective tool for learning a foreign language. One of the experiments also explores whether singing during the learning period is important, or whether listening to songs is sufficient for any learning and memory benefits. The effects of individual differences between participants on learning and memory for material in a new language will also be discussed. In particular, the influence of previous language learning experience and of musical training and experience on foreign language learning will be explored.

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