

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON USING ENGLISH SONGS TO FOSTER YOUNG LEARNERS' AUTONOMY

Huỳnh Ái¹

Nguyen Thi Nha Khanh²

¹Ho Chi Minh University of Banking

²Binh Duong University

*Corresponding Author: Huynh Ai - Email: aih@hub.edu.vn

(Received: 4/9/2025, Revised: 27/9/2025, Accepted for publication: 24/10/2025)

TÓM TẮT

Learner autonomy has become a top priority in Vietnam's English language education system, where national policy strongly emphasizes the development of English proficiency among young learners. This study explores teachers' perspectives on the use of English songs as a pedagogical tool to promote autonomy among young learners. A quantitative survey was conducted at a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City, with data collected from 38 teachers through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were employed to examine perspectives, challenges, and strategies. The findings indicate that teachers highly valued English songs for supporting vocabulary retention, pronunciation self-monitoring, listening comprehension, and learners' willingness to speak. Songs were also seen to create opportunities for learner choice and independent practice, though challenges remained in selecting suitable songs, managing limited class time, and assessing autonomy-related outcomes. The study revealed that songs represent an effective medium for promoting autonomy and offers practical implications for EFL pedagogy in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Learner autonomy, English songs, young learners, teacher perspectives, Vietnam*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and rationale

In Vietnam, English language proficiency has become increasingly important, particularly with the Ministry of Education and Training's (2025) policy "Gradually turning English into a second language in schools" (2025–2035) and its long-term vision to 2045. This policy highlights the need for effective teaching methods that not only improve language skills but also nurture learner autonomy in young learners. Learner autonomy, defined as the ability of learners to take responsibility for their

own learning (Benson, 2011; Lamb, 2018), is widely regarded as a vital element of modern education. Teachers play a crucial role in this process by creating classroom practices that encourage learners to become active and independent participants in their learning (Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996).

Music, particularly English songs, has long been recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool. Murphey (1992) emphasized that songs enhance listening, pronunciation, and fluency, while Lam and Nguyen (2022) noted their role in vocabulary development and

rhyme recognition. Cameron (2001) confirmed their contribution to listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, and Ersöz (2007) observed that the short attention span of young learners makes repetitive musical activities and Total Physical Response (TPR) especially beneficial. Richards and Rodgers (2001) described TPR as the coordination of speech and physical action, a principle embedded in many music-based activities. Moreover, Peretz et al. (2004) found that music improves the retention and retrieval of verbal information, supporting long-term memory. Together, these studies indicate that songs not only enhance affective engagement by reducing anxiety but also strengthen the cognitive processes central to language learning.

1.2. Research problem

Although the benefits of songs in language learning are well established, research has largely concentrated on learners' experiences, with limited attention to teachers' perspectives. For example, Saito (2020) examined learners' enjoyment and motivation but did not address teachers' views on how English songs support autonomy. Lindström (2021) investigated teachers' use of songs for vocabulary teaching but did not explore their connection to fostering independence. Zhao (2022) highlighted the integration of technology into music-based learning, showing its potential to increase engagement, yet provided little insight into teachers' perspectives of autonomy. This imbalance reveals a gap: while learners' outcomes are documented, teachers'

voices remain underexplored, even though their perspectives are important to implementing and sustaining music-based pedagogy effectively.

1.3. Objectives and research questions

This study aims to examine teachers' perspectives of using English songs as a pedagogical tool to enhance autonomy in young learners. It explores how teachers perceive the benefits of songs, the challenges they face in practice, and the strategies they use to maximize their effectiveness. By focusing on teachers, the study seeks to provide an understanding of music-based pedagogy in English as a Foreign Language contexts. Therefore, the study addresses two research questions:

- 1) How do teachers perceive the use of English songs in fostering learner autonomy in young learners?
- 2) What challenges and strategies do teachers identify when employing English songs to promote learner autonomy?

1.4. Significance of the study

This study is significant in both pedagogical and scholarly terms. Pedagogically, it offers insights into how teachers can integrate songs into English instruction to promote autonomy, highlighting the challenges they may encounter. Such findings can inform professional development and curriculum design. From a scholarly perspective, the study contributes to the literature on music-based instruction by addressing the under-explored area of teachers' perspectives. By placing teachers at the center of analysis, it enriches theoretical understanding and

provides practical evidence on fostering autonomy in young EFL learners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Learner autonomy

The concept of learner autonomy has become a cornerstone in the field of second language acquisition. Holec (1981, p.38) defined it as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning,” emphasizing that this ability is acquired rather than innate. Benson (2011) subsequently extended this definition to encompass the learner’s capacity to exert control over objectives, materials, methods, and self-assessment. Meanwhile, Little (1991) clarified that autonomy should not be equated with isolation; rather, it is realized through interaction with teachers, peers, and learning resources. Taken together, these definitions underscore autonomy as both an individual capacity and a socially mediated process.

The role of EFL teachers in actualizing autonomy is pivotal. Littlewood (1996) argued that teachers scaffold the development of independence by providing structured guidance at early stages and gradually transferring responsibility to learners. In the context of young learners, this scaffolding becomes even more essential, as young learners often lack the metacognitive strategies to regulate their own learning. Consequently, the extent to which autonomy emerges depends heavily on teachers’ pedagogical decisions, including their integration of creative resources such as English songs.

2.2. Songs in language learning

The pedagogical value of songs has

been acknowledged for decades, with scholars consistently highlighting their dual contribution to linguistic development. Murphey (1992) demonstrated that English songs provide repetitive and memorable input, thereby enhancing vocabulary retention and improving pronunciation. Similarly, Peretz et al. (2004) confirmed that songs facilitates the retention and retrieval of verbal information, supporting long-term memory consolidation. These findings underscore the cognitive potential of songs as effective scaffolds for vocabulary, pronunciation, and memory in language learning.

The benefits of English songs extend to multiple dimensions of language competence. Shipley (1998) illustrated their contribution to vocabulary acquisition and rhyme recognition, while Cameron (2001) affirmed their effectiveness in developing listening comprehension. Ersöz (2007) highlighted that repetitive and interactive features of songs address young learners’ limited attention spans and working memory. Richards and Rodgers (2001) further argued that Total Physical Response, when embedded in music-based activities, generates a multisensory learning context linking speech with action. Recent empirical evidence adds further weight: Sadiqzade (2025) showed that songs improve vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, and cultural awareness, while also sustaining motivation and providing authentic exposure. Similarly, Meisuri et al. (2025) found that combining songs with interactive games for Indonesian first graders produced notable improvements in vocabulary recall,

pronunciation, and learner participation.

2.3. *Young learners' characteristics*

Young learners' developmental characteristics provide a strong rationale for the use of songs in the English classroom. Children aged six to twelve generally exhibit short attention spans, high curiosity, and a preference for play-based learning (Cameron, 2001). They learn most effectively through sensory engagement, imitation, and repetition. Ersöz (2007) observed that repetitive musical activities can effectively counter-act memory limitations, allowing new input to be reinforced without monotony. Moreover, children's natural affinity for rhythm and melody makes songs a particularly suitable pedagogical tool.

Empirical research corroborates these observations. Faadhilah and Apoko (2022) found that teachers in Jakarta actively employed images, YouTube videos, songs, and games to align instruction with children's learning preferences. Teachers reported that such approaches sustained attention and motivation more effectively than traditional methods. Similarly, Meisuri et al. (2025) demonstrated that the repetitive structures of songs supported focus and engagement among first graders, leading to improved vocabulary retention and confidence.

The congruence between learners' cognitive characteristics and the inherent qualities of songs thus offers a compelling justification for their integration into EFL instruction.

2.4. *Theoretical framework*

Learner autonomy is broadly understood as the capacity to assume responsibility for one's own learning,

encompassing goal setting, independent practice, and self-evaluation (Benson, 2011; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Crucially, autonomy is not innate but emerges when classrooms are structured to support learners' psychological needs (Lamb, 2018).

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), self-determination theory (SDT) offers a strong explanatory model, positing that intrinsic motivation and self-regulation develop when three basic needs are satisfied: autonomy (volition and choice), competence (a sense of mastery), and relatedness (social connection). Teachers are therefore central in shaping autonomy-supportive contexts that enable learners to internalize language learning as self-driven.

Songs align naturally with this framework. They foster autonomy through meaningful learner choice and opportunities for self-initiated rehearsal; strengthen competence by providing rhythmic repetition, memorable input, and scaffolded post-song tasks (Murphey, 1992; Cameron, 2001); and enhance relatedness by creating a positive, participatory classroom climate. In this sense, songs function not merely as supplementary entertainment but as pedagogical tools capable of satisfying psychological needs and thereby promoting autonomy.

The present study operationalizes this framework through three clusters: teachers' perspectives of songs as autonomy-supportive practices, challenges as barriers to need satisfaction (e.g., time, song selection, assessment), and strategies as deliberate scaffolds to

maximize autonomy-supportive potential.

2.5. Previous studies and research gaps

A substantial body of international research has established the pedagogical functions of songs, consistently showing that they provide repetitive input, support vocabulary retention, and enhance listening and pronunciation (Cameron, 2001; Murphey, 1992; Shipley, 1998). Studies conducted in Indonesia, Turkey, and Iran further indicate that song-based activities increase motivation and reduce anxiety, creating a more supportive climate for learning (Erkan, 2018; Hadi, 2019; Sevik, 2011). The mnemonic and rhythmic qualities of music have also been linked to improved long-term retention (Peretz et al., 2004). More recently, Vivone et al. (2025) demonstrated that structured vocal training with pop songs enhanced both vocabulary development and learner engagement, underscoring the dual cognitive and affective potential of songs. Importantly, these findings suggest that songs can stimulate independent engagement, yet this autonomy-supportive dimension remains only indirectly explored.

In Vietnam, empirical studies have similarly highlighted the benefits of songs for young learners. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) reported that teachers considered songs highly effective for vocabulary instruction, while Lam and Nguyen (2022) found that songs improved listening comprehension though remained peripheral to formal curricula. Pham and Le (2024) further

noted that lecturers across age groups perceived songs as most effective for children, with diminishing impact for adult learners unless systematically embedded. Generally, these studies confirm positive teacher attitudes but also show that songs are often treated as supplementary, entertainment-oriented activities rather than structured pedagogical tools.

Despite these contributions, the literature remains skewed toward linguistic outcomes, with limited focus on learner autonomy. Vietnamese scholars have examined either autonomy from the learner's perspective (Le, 2013; Duong, 2021) or teacher perceptions of songs in relation to discrete skills (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Lam & Nguyen, 2022). What is absent is a teacher-centered inquiry into how songs can be strategically employed to satisfy learners' psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as theorized in self-determination theory.

This study addresses this gap by investigating how teachers perceive the use of English songs not merely as motivational aids, but as structured, autonomy-supportive practices that can foster independent engagement and self-regulation among young learners in Vietnam.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

This study was carried out at a private foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City that provides English courses for children aged six to twelve. The curriculum emphasizes communicative and activity-based

methods, with teachers frequently integrating interactive practices such as games, role-plays, and songs to sustain learner engagement. Within this environment, songs are not merely peripheral activities but are embedded as part of classroom routines, making the site particularly appropriate for investigating teachers' perspectives of how song-based pedagogy can foster young learner autonomy.

3.2. Participants

The participants comprised 38 Vietnamese teachers of English working at the center. They were selected purposively to capture diversity in academic qualifications (undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, TESOL/CELTA certificates) and years of teaching experience (ranging from two to fifteen). All participants were responsible for young learner classes. Focusing on teachers directly addresses the research gap identified in the literature review, where most prior studies concentrated on learners' experiences (Duong, 2021; Le, 2013) rather than teachers' voices in relation to autonomy.

3.3. Research design

The study employed a quantitative survey design using a structured questionnaire. Survey methods are widely recognized in applied linguistics for capturing attitudes and perspectives across a relatively large sample in a systematic and replicable manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A questionnaire was deemed appropriate because it enabled the quantification of teachers' perspectives, the identification

of challenges, and the documentation of strategies in relation to the use of songs. This approach also facilitated statistical analysis of the consistency and variation across participants, thereby ensuring objectivity and comparability of responses.

3.4. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to align with the study's two research questions. It consisted of 20 closed-ended items, each measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. To ensure both theoretical coherence and empirical relevance, items were organized into three clusters, each grounded in the literature and reflecting key constructs associated with learner autonomy and song-based pedagogy.

The first cluster, which focused on teachers' perspectives of songs and autonomy, comprised ten items. This cluster assessed teachers' beliefs about the extent to which songs can foster learner autonomy, including learners' responsibility for practice, self-initiated engagement, reduced anxiety, and self-monitoring of progress. As established in prior research, songs have been shown to enhance vocabulary retention, increase motivation, and create a positive classroom climate, all of which are considered essential preconditions for autonomy (Murphey, 1992; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Lam & Khang, 2022).

The second cluster addressed the challenges associated with using songs and contained six items. Specifically, this cluster captured teachers' perspectives of practical and pedagogical difficulties

such as curriculum alignment, limited class time, material selection, and classroom management. These obstacles have been observed in both global and Vietnamese contexts, where songs are frequently treated as supplementary entertainment rather than systematic pedagogical resources (Sadiqzade, 2025; Pham & Le, 2024).

Finally, the third cluster focused on strategies for promoting autonomy through songs and consisted of four items. This cluster investigated the instructional approaches teachers employed to maximize the pedagogical potential of songs, including pre-teaching key vocabulary, establishing repetition routines, designing post-song tasks, and offering learner choice. Such strategies have been consistently recommended in the literature as effective scaffolds for young learners (Cameron, 2001; Nguyen, 2020).

In addition to these three clusters, the questionnaire also included a brief background section. This section gathered information on teachers' qualifications, years of teaching experience, and the frequency with which they incorporated songs into their lessons. These demographic variables were used for descriptive purposes and to provide contextual depth to the analysis. Importantly, the instrument was piloted with 9 teachers from a different language center to assess clarity and reliability. Results of the pilot study indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency across clusters, with Cronbach's α ranging from .79 for the Challenges scale to .85 for the

Perspectives scale, thereby exceeding the recommended threshold of .75 for educational research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Minor revisions were subsequently made to wording for improved clarity, ensuring both reliability and content validity prior to full-scale administration.

3.5. Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to ensure accessibility and convenience for participants. A Google Form link was sent directly to teachers via institutional email and Zalo groups. This mode of distribution was chosen because online administration reduces logistical barriers, facilitates immediate data entry, and enhances data security (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Before accessing the questionnaire, participants were presented with an information sheet outlining the study's objectives, their rights, and assurances of confidentiality. Consent was obtained by asking participants to click an "*I agree to participate*" box before proceeding.

Data collection was conducted over a two-week period in June 2025. Participants completed the questionnaire at their own pace, typically requiring no more than 15 minutes. To minimize non-response bias, a reminder email was sent one week after the initial distribution. Upon submission, responses were automatically stored in a secure Google Sheet, accessible only to the researchers. The dataset was subsequently downloaded in Excel format and exported to SPSS for analysis. In total, 38 EFL teachers completed the questionnaire, representing a full

response rate from the invited participants.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis followed a structured process to ensure rigor and transparency. Firstly, descriptive statistics were computed for each cluster, including means (M), standard deviations (SD), and frequency distributions. These statistics provided an overview of teachers' perspectives of English songs, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed. Such descriptive summaries are widely used in survey research to capture central tendencies and variation in responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Secondly, cluster reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α , with $\alpha \geq .75$ adopted as the criterion for acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Item-total correlations were also examined, and none fell below .30, confirming strong homogeneity within each cluster.

Thirdly, Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to examine the relationships among the three main constructs: perspectives, challenges, and strategies. This step was crucial for identifying whether teachers who held more positive perceptions of songs also reported fewer challenges, or whether high levels of perceived challenges were associated with the adoption of compensatory strategies. Pearson's correlation was deemed appropriate given the continuous and normally distributed nature of the Likert-scale data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Finally, the results from descriptive

and correlational analyses were interpreted in light of the existing literature to draw connections between teachers' reported practices and the theoretical constructs of learner autonomy. Descriptive summaries, and correlational evidence, the analysis provided both a comprehensive overview and deeper insights into the role of songs in supporting autonomy among young learners.

3.7. Reliability and validity

Several measures were employed to ensure rigor. Content validity was established by aligning questionnaire items with constructs identified in the literature (e.g., Cameron, 2001; Murphey, 1992; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Construct validity was addressed through the use of cluster-based item grouping reflecting theoretical dimensions of autonomy and song-based pedagogy. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α , with a target threshold of $\geq .75$ for each cluster (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). To enhance dependability, all data analysis procedures were documented systematically to allow for replication.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Background of participants

Table 1 shows that most teachers held a BA in English education (60.5%), while a smaller proportion held a MA degree (26.3%). This distribution suggests that the teaching cohort is largely composed of bachelor-level graduates, with only about one-quarter pursuing postgraduate qualifications. A further 13.2% fell into the "Others" category, including those with professional diplomas or related certificates.

Table 1: General information of participants (N = 38)

Variable	Category	%
Qualification	BA	60.5
	MA	26.3
	Others	13.2
Years of teaching YLs	0–2	21.1
	3–5	36.8
	6–10	28.9
	11+	13.2
	≤15	18.4
Class size	16–25	57.9
	26–35	23.7
	Rarely/Sometimes	28.9
Frequency of song use	Often/Every lesson	71.1

In terms of teaching experience, a significant number of participants (65.7%) had undergone between three and ten years of teaching, indicating that most were well-established practitioners rather than novices. Regarding class size, the predominant pattern was medium-sized classes (16–25 students, 57.9%), which aligns with the organizational structure of many private English centers in Vietnam.

Most notably, over 70% of teachers reported using songs regularly or in almost every lesson, confirming that songs are not viewed as peripheral but rather as a mainstream pedagogical practice. This widespread adoption underscores the significance of examining how teachers perceive the role of songs in promoting learner autonomy.

4.2. Teachers' perspectives of songs and autonomy

As shown in Table 2, teachers expressed generally positive perspectives of the role of songs in fostering learner autonomy, with an overall mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.46). Notably, the highest-rated items

concerned learners' responsibility for practice (M = 4.32, SD = 0.58) and self-initiation after lessons (M = 4.29, SD = 0.61). These results indicate that teachers strongly believe that songs stimulate learners to take ownership of learning both in and beyond the classrooms. Moreover, items addressing linguistic benefits also received high levels of endorsement. Teachers particularly valued the contribution of English songs to vocabulary retention (M = 4.24, SD = 0.54), pronunciation self-monitoring (M = 4.20, SD = 0.60), and students' willingness to speak (M=4.18, SD=0.62), while listening comprehension (M = 4.13, SD = 0.63) was similarly well-regarded. In addition, participants noted that songs facilitate meaningful learner choice (M = 4.11, SD = 0.66). These findings suggest that teachers view songs as powerful cognitive and linguistic scaffolds. By contrast, the perceived affective benefits were slightly less pronounced. While teachers acknowledged that songs help create a positive classroom climate and reduce anxiety (3.97, SD = 0.70), the mean score was lower compared with

linguistic and responsibility-focused items. Finally, the lowest-rated items related to self-regulation. Teachers were less certain that songs effectively encourage learners to set personal goals ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.71$) or monitor their progress over time ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.68$). This finding suggests some skepticism about the extent to which young learners are capable of engaging in advanced forms of autonomy.

Taken together, these results position songs not as peripheral “fun” add-ons but as pedagogically substantive tools that teachers believe foster autonomy-related behaviors. The high ratings on responsibility and self-initiation align with foundational arguments that songs provide repetitive, memorable input and stimulate active participation (Murphey, 1992).

Crucially, the present findings extend that tradition by showing that teachers explicitly connect songs to autonomy, which is learners practising on their own accord, rather than to motivation or enjoyment alone (Sadiqzade, 2025).

Moreover, the strong endorsement of linguistic gains is consistent with prior Vietnamese evidence: teachers have reported that songs are effective for vocabulary retention (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020) and listening improvement with young learners (Lam & Nguyen, 2022). However, the current data move beyond a skills-only framing; teachers interpret these linguistic benefits as pathways to independent use, thereby situating songs within an autonomy-supportive pedagogy rather than as isolated skill boosters (Pham & Le, 2024).

Table 2: *Teachers' perspectives of songs in fostering learner autonomy (N = 38)*

Items	Statements	M	SD
1	Songs help learners take more responsibility for practising English outside class.	4.32	0.58
2	After song-based lessons, many learners practise or sing English lines on their own without prompts.	4.29	0.61
3	Song activities make it easier to offer learners meaningful choices (e.g., tasks or roles).	4.11	0.66
4	Songs increase learners' willingness to speak even when they are unsure.	4.18	0.62
5	Songs support long-term vocabulary retention, enabling more independent use across tasks.	4.24	0.54
6	Repetition and rhythm in songs improve pronunciation accuracy that learners can self-monitor.	4.20	0.60
7	Song-based listening tasks improve focus and comprehension for independent follow-up.	4.13	0.63
8	The positive classroom climate created by songs reduces anxiety that prevents self-initiated practice.	3.97	0.70
9	When I use songs, learners are more likely to set personal learning goals (e.g., mastering a chorus).	3.88	0.71
10	Using songs encourages learners to track their own progress over time.	3.91	0.68
Overall		4.12	0.46

By contrast, the relatively lower means for goal-setting and self-monitoring resonate with studies documenting relative autonomy among Vietnamese learners, where independence is exercised within teacher-structured frameworks rather than proactively initiated ones (Duong, 2021; Le, 2013). Accordingly, the findings suggest that while songs readily trigger practice and participation, structured supports (e.g., brief personal goals tied to a chorus; simple progress logs after song tasks) are needed to cultivate metacognitive autonomy in this age group, an implication compatible with calls for more systematic integration of music-based pedagogy (Sadiqzade, 2025).

Finally, recent experimental evidence showing significant vocabulary gains through vocal training with authentic pop songs (Vivone et al., 2025) underscores the feasibility of moving from teacher-perceived benefits to designed, structured interventions. These findings indicate that EFL teachers already hold the requisite beliefs, which was expressed by the high means across Items 1–7 to support such designs with young learners.

Relative to previous Vietnamese studies that emphasized skill outcomes or treated songs as supplementary (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Lam & Nguyen, 2022; Pham & Le, 2024), the present study contributes a teacher-centred, autonomy-focused account. Teachers do not merely endorse songs for vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening; they explicitly link songs to independent practice and responsibility,

thereby reframing songs as core drivers of learner autonomy in early EFL instructions.

4.3. Teachers' reported challenges and strategies

4.3.1. Teachers' reported challenges

The results in Table 3 show that teachers reported moderate-to-high levels of difficulty in using songs to foster learner autonomy, as reflected in the overall challenge mean ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.70$). The most prominent difficulties concerned assessing autonomy-related outcomes ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.66$) and selecting songs that were both age-appropriate and linguistically suitable ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.63$). These findings underscore that teachers are most concerned with how to measure the impact of songs on autonomy and how to choose materials that align with learners' developmental needs, particularly their cognitive maturity, linguistic readiness, and capacity for independent learning. Moreover, time constraints also ranked as a major barrier ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.69$). This suggests that while teachers value songs, they often struggle to allocate sufficient class time for meaningful integration, a challenge that has also been reported in Vietnamese classrooms where curricula are tightly structured. In addition, classroom management ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.71$) and aligning songs with curricular and assessment requirements ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.74$) were considered moderately challenging. These scores indicate that teachers are conscious of the practical and institutional demands of integrating songs, even if these are not perceived as their most pressing concerns.

Table 3: *Teachers' perspectives of challenges in using songs to promote autonomy*

Items	Statements	M	SD
11	Aligning songs with curriculum objectives and assessment requirements is difficult.	3.82	0.74
12	Limited class time prevents thorough use of song-based activities.	4.05	0.69
13	Selecting age-appropriate and linguistically suitable songs is challenging.	4.08	0.63
14	Managing the classroom during song activities is demanding with young learners.	3.91	0.71
15	Limited access to technology or resources constrains my use of songs.	3.67	0.77
16	Assessing autonomy-related outcomes from song-based activities is difficult.	4.11	0.66
Total		3.94	0.70

In the meantime, the lowest mean was observed for limitations in technology and resources ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.77$). Although not insignificant, this challenge appears less acute, and the relatively higher standard deviation suggests variability across teaching contexts: some teachers may work in resource-rich environments, while others experience constraints.

Taken together, these findings highlight several important insights. Firstly, there is a strong consensus that material selection is a universal concern, as reflected in the lowest variability ($SD = 0.63$). Secondly, difficulties in assessment and time allocation point to

systemic issues that extend beyond individual teacher practices. Finally, the fact that resource-related challenges are less uniformly endorsed implies that institutional support is unevenly distributed rather than universally lacking.

4.3.2. Teachers' reported strategies

The results in Table 4 reveal that teachers reported a high level of strategy use when employing songs to foster learner autonomy, with an overall strategy index of 4.08 ($SD = 0.47$). This suggests that teachers do not merely perceive songs as beneficial; they also apply a range of concrete practices to maximize their pedagogical impact.

Table 4: *Teachers' perspectives of strategies in using songs to promote autonomy*

Items	Statements	M	SD
17	I explicitly set learning goals and pre-teach vocabulary and pronunciation before songs.	4.18	0.61
18	I establish routines of spaced repetition with selected songs.	4.05	0.58
19	I incorporate post-song tasks requiring independent language use.	4.12	0.65
20	I provide learner choice (e.g., voting for songs, self-assessment activities).	3.95	0.70
Total		4.08	0.47

Remarkably, the most frequently endorsed strategy was explicit goal-setting combined with pre-teaching vocabulary and pronunciation ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.61$). This indicates that teachers recognize the importance of scaffolding learners prior to song-based activities, ensuring that pupils have the linguistic and cognitive tools to benefit fully from the experience. Moreover, the integration of post-song tasks requiring independent language use ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.65$) also received strong agreement. This finding highlights teachers' awareness that songs should not stand alone as isolated events, but rather be extended into tasks that demand independent application such as lyric reconstruction, role-play, or creative outputs that reinforce autonomy. In addition, the establishment of repetition routines ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.58$) was widely practiced. This strategy reflects teachers' belief that autonomy develops gradually through consistent exposure, echoing pedagogical principles that emphasize spaced practice and cyclical reinforcement for long-term retention.

Nevertheless, the lowest, though still positive, endorsement concerned learner

choice and self-assessment opportunities ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.70$). While this suggests that teachers acknowledge the role of agency in promoting autonomy, they appear somewhat less confident or systematic in implementing practices that transfer decision-making power directly to learners. The higher variability ($SD = 0.70$) further suggests that adoption of this strategy varies significantly across classroom.

4.4. Pearson correlations

Table 5 shows a moderate positive correlation between APS and ST ($r = .52$), meaning teachers who view songs as autonomy-supportive are more likely to implement strategies such as pre-teaching, repetition, post-song tasks, and learner choice. In addition, the negative link between APS and CH ($r = -.34$) suggests that stronger beliefs in songs' value are associated with fewer perceived barriers, particularly regarding time, selection, and assessment. Finally, the near-zero relation between CH and ST ($r = .06$) indicates that teachers apply strategies even when challenges exist, highlighting the resilience of their practices.

Table 5: Pearson correlations among composite indices (N=38)

Pair	r	p (two-tailed)	Interpretation
APS – ST	.52	.001	Moderate positive association: more positive perceptions co-occur with greater use of autonomy-supportive strategies.
APS – CH	-.34	.036	Small-moderate negative association: more positive perceptions co-occur with fewer perceived challenges.
CH – ST	.06	.71	Near-zero association: perceived challenges do not systematically predict strategy deployment.

The results indicate that teachers encounter substantial challenges with total mean scores of 3.94, while simultaneously reporting consistent and deliberate strategy use ($M = 4.08$). The most prominent barriers concerned assessing autonomy-related outcomes ($M = 4.11$) and selecting age-appropriate, linguistically suitable songs ($M = 4.08$). These findings align with earlier reports that songs are often regarded as supplementary due to weak assessment frameworks and limited instructional resources (Lam & Nguyen, 2022; Pham & Le, 2024). Crucially, however, the present study extends this discussion by identifying autonomy assessment itself as the most pressing difficulty, an issue that has remained underexplored in previous research.

In addition, constraints relating to time pressure ($M = 4.05$) and classroom management ($M = 3.91$) mirror challenges were documented in earlier Vietnamese studies (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Yet, despite these limitations, teachers continue to integrate songs into their practice, reflecting a strong pedagogical commitment. However, resource limitations were rated comparatively lower ($M = 3.67$) than those typically emphasized in international contexts (Sadiqzade, 2025), suggesting that Vietnamese teachers have adapted through low-tech and contextually responsive approaches.

On the strategy side, the most highly endorsed practices included pre-teaching and goal-setting ($M = 4.18$), post-song extension tasks ($M = 4.12$), and spaced repetition ($M = 4.05$). These strategies corroborate earlier recommendations that songs be embedded in structured

instructional routines (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Murphey, 1992). Although learner choice and self-assessment ($M = 3.95$) were less consistently emphasized, their inclusion nonetheless reflects an incremental shift from predominantly “reactive autonomy” towards a more proactive model of autonomy in which learners gradually assume greater responsibility (Duong, 2021; Le, 2013).

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that Vietnamese EFL teachers perceive English songs not merely as supplementary tools but as strategic resources for fostering learner autonomy among young learners. While they acknowledge notable challenges, particularly in assessing autonomy, selecting suitable songs, and managing limited class time, they also demonstrate resilient and deliberate use of strategies such as pre-teaching, post-song extension tasks, and repetition routines. Teachers’ willingness to integrate learner choice and self-assessment, though less emphasized, signals an incremental move from reactive to more proactive forms of autonomy. Collectively, these findings highlight teachers as active agents of pedagogical innovation, bridging global evidence on music-based learning with local classroom realities.

Beyond these contributions, the study points to several directions for further research. Future studies could expand the sample across different regions and institutional types to enhance generalizability, employ classroom observations to triangulate self-reported data, and explore

longitudinal effects of song-based voices would also provide a more pedagogy on the development of learner comprehensive understanding of how autonomy. Investigating learners' songs function as autonomy-supportive perspectives in tandem with teachers' practices in EFL contexts.

REFERENCES

- Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Duong, M. T. (2021). Learner autonomy in English language learning: Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions and practices. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 1(3), 35–63.
- Faadhilah, N., & Apoko, L. (2022). Songs in EFL classrooms: Teachers' strategies and challenges. *Journal of English Language Education*, 7(1), 12–25.
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Pergamon.
- Lam, T. N. D., & Nguyen, D. K. (2022). FL teachers' perceptions on utilizing songs for teaching English listening skills to young learners: A case study in Tra Vinh Province. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(3), 1–18.
- Lamb, T. (2018). Learner autonomy and teacher autonomy. In T. Lamb & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Learner and teacher autonomy: Concepts, realities, and responses* (pp. 269–284). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aals.1.21lam>
- Le, T. Q. (2013). *Fostering learner autonomy in language learning in tertiary education: An intervention study of university students in Vietnam* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham].
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy: Definitions, issues and problems*. Authentik.
- Littlewood, W. (1996). Autonomy: An anatomy and a framework. *System*, 24(4), 427–435. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(96\)00039-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(96)00039-5)
- Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). (2025). *Gradually turning English into a second language in schools: 2025–2035 strategy*. MOET.
- Murphey, T. (1992). *Music and song*. Oxford University Press.
- Nguyen, H. T., & Nguyen, T. M. (2020). Using songs in teaching English vocabulary to primary students in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 36(4), 84–95. <https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4575>.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Peretz, I., Radeau, M., & Arguin, M. (2004). Two-way interactions between music and language: Evidence from priming recognition of tune and lyrics in familiar songs. *Memory & Cognition*, 32(1), 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03195829>.
- Pham, T. L. H., & Le, T. T. (2024). Exploring the impact of songs in EFL teaching across age groups: Perspectives from Vietnamese EFL lecturers. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 4(1), 115–130.

- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>.
- Sadiqzade, A. (2025). Teachers' perceptions of songs in EFL classrooms: Pedagogical opportunities and constraints. *Journal of Language Education Research*, 5(2), 50–67.
- Sevik, M. (2011). Teacher views about using songs in teaching English to young learners. *Educational Research and Review*, 6(21), 1027–1035. <https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR11.250>.
- Shipley, D. (1998). *Song and play time in early childhood education*. Scholastic.
- Vivone, G., Baroni, M., & Russo, F. (2025). Maximizing linguistic and cognitive potential: The role of vocal training with pop songs in teaching English as a foreign language. *Language Learning*, 75(2), 305–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12456>.

QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA GIÁO VIÊN VỀ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CÁC BÀI HÁT TIẾNG ANH ĐỂ THÚC ĐẨY NĂNG LỰC TỰ CHỦ CỦA HỌC SINH NHỎ TUỔI

Huỳnh Ái¹

Nguyễn Thị Nhã Khanh²

¹Trường Đại học Ngân hàng Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

²Trường Đại học Bình Dương

*Tác giả liên hệ: Huỳnh Ái - Email: aih@hub.edu.vn

(Ngày nhận bài: 4/9/2025, ngày nhận bài chỉnh sửa: 27/9/2025, ngày duyệt đăng: 24/10/2025)

TÓM TẮT

Tính tự chủ trong học tập đã trở thành chính sách ưu tiên trong hệ thống giáo dục tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam, đặc biệt đối với học sinh nhỏ tuổi. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu quan điểm của giáo viên về việc sử dụng các bài hát tiếng Anh như một công cụ giảng dạy nhằm thúc đẩy tính tự chủ. Một khảo sát định lượng đã tiến hành tại một trung tâm ngoại ngữ ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, sử dụng bảng hỏi có cấu trúc để thu thập dữ liệu từ 38 giáo viên. Sử dụng thống kê mô tả và phân tích tương quan để xem xét các quan điểm, các khó khăn và các chiến lược. Kết quả cho thấy giáo viên đánh giá cao vai trò của bài hát trong việc hỗ trợ học sinh ghi nhớ từ vựng, tự điều chỉnh phát âm, nâng cao khả năng nghe hiểu và giao tiếp. Ngoài ra, bài hát còn tạo điều kiện cho học sinh có cơ hội lựa chọn và thực hành độc lập, mặc dù vẫn còn đó những khó khăn như: lựa chọn bài hát phù hợp, hạn chế thời gian trên lớp và đánh giá mức độ tự chủ dựa trên kết quả. Nghiên cứu đưa ra kết luận rằng bài hát tiếng Anh là một phương tiện trung gian hiệu quả để thúc đẩy tính tự chủ của người học, đồng thời mang lại những hàm ý thực tiễn cho đào tạo giáo viên và phát triển chương trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam hiện nay.

Từ khóa: *Tự chủ học tập, bài hát tiếng Anh, học sinh nhỏ tuổi, quan điểm của giáo viên, Việt Nam*