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## Impact of Nursery Rhymes on Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Skill Improvement-A Study

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of nursery rhymes on the young language learners listening comprehension ability. To do so, 30 elementary learners were selected as the potential participants of the study. The learners' perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening as well as teachers' perceptions about teaching listening comprehension through nursery rhymes were taken into account. The listening pre- and post-tests and teachers and learners' interviews were employed for data collection procedures. Quantitative as well as qualitative methodologies were adapted for data analysis. Findings showed that the young learners could improve their listening comprehension ability as a result of using nursery rhymes. Interview data also indicated that the learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes were found to be positive since the rhymes provided an interesting atmosphere for the learners to improve their listening comprehension while benefiting from peer interaction and teacher's support in the listening classroom. Teachers' perceptions were also realistic regarding using nursery rhymes in teaching listening, especially for young learners. As to the implication side, finding can contribute to the positive application of nursery rhymes in paving the way for young learners to improve their listening comprehension ability.

**Keywords:** *Nursery Rhymes, Listening Improvement, Young Learners, Learners and Teachers' Perceptions*

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### 1. Introduction

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of nursery rhymes on the elementary young language learners' listening ability. As to the listening instruction, it seems that language scholars have been involved with listening instruction through various methodologies (Rost 2002; Graham, 2003). In this regard, some challenging issues can be taken into account with respect to listening instruction and young language learners' listening improvement through nursery rhymes.

First, in societies which English is a foreign language, not the second language, the EFL learners do not have the chance to be in English atmosphere whenever they need in their real life to improve their listening (Ghanbari & Hashemian, 2014), so it makes the English teachers more responsible to find a way to help the learners have a way to get listening skills better and faster, and with less difficulty.

Second, as young language learners begin learning how to speak and communicate with others by listening to others; it seems that listening is the first step in learning process and to initiate communication. So, English teachers need to consider it very important and try to find the best way to teach listening and make it fun for the learners, leading to their enjoyment and efficient listening practice (Gauthier & Lejeune, 2008).

Third, it cannot be denied that there is a close relationship between song and rhymes with respect to teaching listening. This is because of the fact that once producing an English utterance with a rhythmic pattern, it can motivate the children to produce the utterances and enjoy the atmosphere. Graham (1994) explains that stress can help the learners to produce rhythmic speech. English has a rhythm in which stress syllables normally occur at regular time intervals. Thus, in English,



rhythmic patterns are based upon a fairly regular recurrence of stressed syllables. There seems to be scarce research on the effect of song and rhythmic sound on the improvement of young language learners.

Pourkalhor & Tavakoli (2017) also observe that most children are interested in singing songs, and they can positively change their routine form of learning a foreign language through rhythmic sounds for educational purposes. They also elaborate many benefits of using songs in EFL classrooms and present useful implications for developing language skills.

Fourth, the L2 learners, as posed by Bodden (2010), may feel more fluent singing along to song lyrics than they do speaking an L2, leading to their self-confidence. Also, a range of colloquial language can easily be introduced through songs. Regular practice lyrics and rhymes may improve prediction and comprehension skills. Applying conventional techniques in teaching the English language such as explaining and drilling make the classroom atmosphere unattractive and can be very dull for the L2 learners. Generally, L2 teachers in Iran like any other countries are seeking ways to improve the L2 learners' level of proficiency and accuracy in English. So, the question for many L2 teachers is how to encourage L2 learners to improve their listening skills and one of the main language concerns, particularly for foreign language learners (Ghanbari & Hashemian, 2014).

Last but not least, learners (particularly young ones) and teachers' perceptions about nursery rhymes have not yet been considered by researchers. Belief studies were mostly concerned with perceptions about language learning (Kern, 1995; Horwitz, 1998); however, the present study looks into the learners' possible changes of their perceptions about nursery rhymes.

Therefore, it can be concluded that songs have the power and influence not only on the learners' physical and mental conditions but also they can prompt a positive attitude toward L2 learning, somehow, they can recharge the learners' minds. Positive attitude is a must for successful learning atmosphere. Positive energy confirmation and a belief in the L2 learner's ability develop a comfortable atmosphere for the students in the classroom. Hence, the present study intended to account for the effectiveness of

nursery rhymes on the elementary EFL learners' listening ability. Moreover, the learners as well as teachers' perceptions about nursery rhymes were taken into account.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do nursery rhymes result in significant improvement in young EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?
2. What are the young EFL learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening comprehension?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions about listening instruction through nursery rhymes?

## **2. The Present Study**

### ***2.1 Participants***

As to the purpose of the study, 30 young elementary students, who were studying in a private language institute in Khazaeli Institute, Tehran, Iran were the candidates of the study. Their age ranged from 7 to 8. They constituted 15 male and 15 female EFL young language learners. It is noteworthy that all the participants have been studying English for one year and they were native speakers of Persian. Concerning the sampling of the participants, as Dornyei (2007) points out that "the main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn" (p.126), hence, the study benefited from convenience sampling method, i.e. selecting the participants who are available and can help the researcher to collect the desirable data to meet the purpose of the study. The participants were also randomly divided into one experimental (n=15) and one control group (n=15). It should also be noted that five teachers of the target institute took part in the study to explore their perceptions about teaching listening through nursery rhymes.

### ***2.2 Instruments***

The following instruments were used in order to collect the required data:

#### **OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST (OPT)**

Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered at the beginning of the study to select homogenous samples in terms of their proficiency levels. It is noteworthy that the participants of the study were of elementary level and OPT was applied to select elementary young language learners.

#### **THE PRE-TEST**

In order to check the young learners' initial listening ability, they listened to the

Key English Test (KET, which is designed by Cambridge University Press). The KET (see appendix 1) included 25 listening questions aiming to test the learners' listening ability by providing multiple questions including filling in the blanks and multiple choice type.

#### THE POST-TEST

Similar to the pre-test, another version of the KET (see appendix 2) was provided to check the effectiveness of nursery rhymes on the learners' listening ability. In fact, the purpose was to see whether nursery rhymes could result in improvement in the young language learners' listening ability.

#### LEARNERS' SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

To examine the learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes, they were cordially invited to take part in a semi-structured interview session to investigate their initial perceptions about nursery rhymes before the intervention. The interview questions the learners were to answer include:

1. What do you know about nursery rhymes?
2. How should listening be taught?
3. Are you interested in learning to listen by nursery rhymes?
4. How teaching and learning listening are important to you?

After the treatment sessions of listening to nursery rhymes, they were invited for the second semi-structured interview to see whether nursery rhymes could result in probable changes in their perceptions about listening. In fact, semi-structured interview, which was taken by the experimental groups, was done almost with the same above-mentioned questions to check consistency among the learners' answers for the second interview. It should be noted that the semi-structured interview sessions were audio recorded for further analysis.

#### TEACHERS' SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The teachers were invited to take part in the semi-structured interview session to look into their perceptions about teaching listening through nursery rhymes. In fact, it was aimed to investigate whether the teachers were aware of the positive application of nursery rhymes on the young language learners' listening improvement. The teacher's interview questions include:

1. What are the effects of nursery rhymes in education?

2. Are you taking advantage of applying nursery rhymes in teaching listening?

3. How can nursery rhymes be applied at the service of teaching listening?

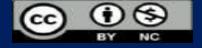
#### 2.3 Procedure

The present study benefited from young elementary students who were studying in a private language institute as the main participants of the study. The study aimed to look into the impact of nursery rhymes on the young EFL language learners' listening ability in one hand, and explore their perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening on the other. To meet the issue of homogeneity regarding the learners' proficiency levels, they took OPT. Then, the participants were divided into one experimental group and one control group. Then, both groups took the pre-test to examine their initial listening ability. They also took part in a semi-structured interview session to probe their perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening. After that, they underwent six two-hour treatment sessions of listening instruction through nursery rhymes.

As to the treatment sessions, the learners were initially given some general points regarding the purpose of the present research to put them into the clear picture of the study goals. In order to reach harmony in using nursery rhymes, the learners' textbook 'Song Time 1' was used. In order to teach the nursery rhymes for listening purposes, the teacher, who was the researcher herself, encouraged the learners to go for the provided exercises in order to encourage their warm-up and make their mind ready for the target listening. The learners were expected to listen to the rhymes and practice it in chorus. After repeating together, they were required to work on the exercises in pairs and then share their answers in group. In this way, learners experienced an interactive environment through which they benefited from peer feedback, the teacher's support as well as feedback on the content and the focused listening item.

On the other hand, the control group received no listening instruction through nursery rhymes by being exposed to traditional teaching of listening without any interaction focusing merely on the product of the listening.

After the treatment sessions, the participants of the study took the post-test to investigate the effectiveness of treatment sessions on the young learners' improvement in listening ability. They were also invited to take part in the second semi-



structured interview to examine the probable changes in their perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening. It should be noted that the first and second semi-structured interview sessions were audio recorded. Finally, semi-structured interview was done with the participant teachers to look into their perceptions about teaching listening through nursery rhymes to have a thorough investigation regarding their awareness of applying nursery rhymes in teaching listening.

### 3. Data Analysis

Regarding the research questions underlying the present study, quantitative and qualitative data analysis was adopted. As to the first research question (i.e. does nursery rhyme result in significant improvement in young EFL learners' listening ability?), the learners' pre- and post-test scores were measured both descriptively and inferentially by independent sample t-test through SPSS software (version 22).

On the other hand, the second research question (i.e. what are the young EFL learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening?), as well as the third research question (i.e. what are the teachers' perceptions about listening instruction through nursery rhymes?), which were the qualitative part of the study, was analyzed by the application of grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which aims at coding the data to find out the main categories emerged in the learners and teachers' semi-structured interview transcriptions for the purpose of figuring out the main perceptions they held about nursery rhymes in teaching listening.

### 4. Results

In this section, initially, a descriptive analysis of the data for the first research question is provided. Then, the inferential analysis of the data is explained using tables. The descriptive analysis of the study consists of a discussion of the mean, standard deviation and the standard error of measurement. Similarly, the inferential analysis of the data in this study consists of calculating the paired-sample t value between the pre-test and the post-test of each group. An independent-samples t-test was also conducted to compare the means of the post-test of the experimental group and control group. After quantitative findings, the categorizations of the learners and teachers' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening are explained to qualitatively go for research findings.

## Investigation of the First Research Question

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Data

The descriptive analysis of the data for different groups of the study has been summarized below. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive analysis of the data of experimental group of the study.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the experimental group*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	11.1667	30	1.84066	.31780
Posttest	15.1167	30	1.30833	.22061

As Table 1 indicates, the mean value of listening practice for the experimental group before receiving the treatment sessions of nursery rhymes is 11.1667 (SD=.31780), while the mean for the experimental group after the nursery rhyme instruction is 15.1167 (SD=.22061). It is obvious that the experimental group performance on the post-test of listening ability improved greatly after the treatment sessions. It can be inferred that the use of nursery rhymes was effective in helping the young learners to improve their listening ability.

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive analysis of the data of the control group before and after the treatment sessions.

*Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the control group*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	11.7667	30	2.01015	.36901
Posttest	12.8833	30	1.82196	.35273

As Table 2 shows, the mean for the control group before listening instruction through nursery rhyme is 11.7667 (SD=.36901), while the mean of the control group after the treatment is 12.8833 (SD=.35273). As to the learner's performance on the post-test, the control group showed a small degree of improvement.

Table 3 indicates the descriptive analysis of the experimental and control groups for the post-test scores of the learners' listening ability through nursery rhymes as in the following:

*Table 3. Descriptive analysis of the experimental and control groups for the post-test*

Text	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Listening Control Group	30	12.8833	2.02115	.36901
Experimental Group	30	15.1167	1.20833	.22061

As to the Table 3, it was found that the mean value of the experimental group on the post-test scores of listening is 15.1167 with a standard deviation of

1.20833. However, the mean value of the control group of the study in the post-test is far lower than that of the experimental group (Mean=12.8833, SD=2.02115). Thus, it can be concluded that although two groups had almost the same mean value on the pre-test, the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test of listening highlighting the significant effect of the nursery rhymes on the young learners' listening ability. Yet, in order to investigate whether the difference between groups is significant, the results of t-tests should be presented and discussed.

#### 4.2 The Inferential Analysis of the Data

The inferential analyses of the data for answering the first research question have been summarized in the tables below.

Table 4 summarizes the inferential analysis of the data before and after treatment sessions for the experimental group of the study.

*Table 4. Paired-samples test for the experimental group*

	Paired Differences					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired1 Experimental Group						
Pretest-Posttest	-3.9500	1.0284	.18777	-21.036	29	.000

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the treatment sessions of nursery rhymes on the students' scores on the listening tests. There was a statistically significant increase in listening scores from the pre-test (M = 11.1667, SD = .31780) to the post-test (M = 15.1167, SD = 1.0284),  $t(29) = 21.036$ ,  $p < .0005$  (two-tailed). The mean increase in listening test scores was 3.95 with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 5 demonstrates the inferential analysis of the data before and after the treatment for the control group of the study.

*Table 5. Paired-samples test for the control group*

	Paired Differences					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired1 Control Group						
Pretest-Posttest	-1.116	.970	.17728	-6.299	29	.000

A paired-samples t-test was measured to investigate whether the traditional listening instruction could result any improvement in the students' scores on the tests of listening or not. It was found that there was not a statistically significant increase in listening scores from the pre-test (M = 11.7667, SD = .3690) to post-test (M = 12.8833, SD = .35273),  $t(29) = 6.299$ ,  $p < .0005$  (two-tailed). The mean increase in listening scores was 1.116 with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 6 summarizes the inferential analysis of the post-test scores for the control and experimental groups.

*Table 6. Independent-samples t-test for the post-test of both groups*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6.17	.015	58	.000	-3.23333	.41603	-4.06612	-2.40055
Equal variances not assumed			48.677	.000	-3.23333	.41603	4.06953	-2.39714

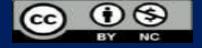
An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the effect of two kinds of instructions (listening instruction through nursery rhymes and traditional method of teaching listening) on the young learners' listening ability. The Sig. value for Levene's test is not larger than .05 (.015), then the second line in the Table should be used, which refers to the point that equal variances are not assumed. There was significant difference in scores for the control group (M = 34.02, SD = 4.91) and experimental group (M = 12.8833, SD = .35273);  $t(48) = 7.662$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed).

Overall, it was revealed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group in the post-test measures of listening tests, which indicates the great effectiveness of nursery rhymes for the improvement of students' listening ability.

#### Investigation of the Second Research Question

The second research question of the study is 'what are the young EFL learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening?'. To take this question into account, the young learners' responses to the interview were categorized with respect to the coding of data, and then partial transcriptions of the learners' interview extracts were provided to be in line with the categories. Before going through the categories, the interview questions are provided in the following:

1. What do you know about nursery rhymes?
2. How should listening be taught?
3. Are you interested in learning to listen by nursery rhymes?



4. How teaching and learning listening are important to you?

Concerning the learners' responses, coding of the answers were done to find out the emerged categories based on the initial coding of the answers. Then, axial coding of data was done to discover the main categories of data for the purpose of selective coding at the final stage. These categories involved 1) learners' initial perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening; and 2) learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes after the treatment. Each of these two main categories has sub categories to appropriately analyze the data. Regarding the first category, the following classifications can be made as to the coding procedure:

- a) Listening is difficult to learn
- b) Lack of interest in learning to listen

As to the learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening at the end of the term, the following codes appeared in the learners' responses:

- c) Listening can be taught by nursery rhymes
- d) Nursery rhymes are interesting in learning

Fifteen participants of the experimental group were interviewed. As the responses of the experimental group were important regarding the purpose of the study, their belief change was thoroughly analyzed. Here, each of these sub-categories is discussed and interview extracts are explained for more clarification.

#### Learners' Initial Perceptions about Nursery Rhymes in Teaching Listening

As to the learners' perceptions, their interview indicated that they seemed to have simplistic perceptions about teaching listening, which clearly highlights their unfamiliarity with the skill. The learners' lack of awareness about learning to listen at the beginning of the term can be highlighted as in the following:

##### a) Listening is Difficult to Learn

As to the difficulty of listening, almost all the participants (n=14) believed that listening was not that easy to comprehend. In fact, the young learners appeared to have not sufficient understanding of listening and how it can be taught even through nursery rhymes since they did not concentrate on using nursery rhyme in teaching listening. As an example, one of the participants' extracts is as follows:

#### Extract 1.

*"I think that listening is the most difficult skill since it is not funny and therefore less energetic and full of hard words."*

It seems that the learner was not satisfied with listening instruction taken place in the class and considered it as less energetic and without any possible fun. Teaching listening did not satisfy their expectations although the participants were not conscious of what is exactly meant by listening since most of them held the belief that listening means only listening to tape and do the related exercises. Learners' perceptions appear to be simplistic and this may be due to their teachers' teaching methodology in teaching listening without any inspiring activity to encourage their more interaction.

##### b) Lack of Interest in Learning to Listen

The participants' responses to the interview questions revealed their lack of eagerness in listening. It seems that learners' lack of interest in listening might be due to the difficulty they face in learning how to listen, which was pointed out in the previous section. Concerning the learners' reluctance to listening, the majority of the participants (n=11) believed that when they are working on listening exercises, there are no additional to-do works to make the listening less boring, and provide and encouraging atmosphere for the learners to create a sense of interest in the learners' perceptions about listening. One of the reluctant learners' perceptions about listening is provided below:

#### Extract 2.

*"When we want to do listening activities, the teacher asks us to do the required tasks of the book individually or with our classmates. It is boring just to answer the questions without having any talk with the friends. There is no fun. This makes it boring for us."*

The above extract indicates that participants were in favor of having more active exercises in listening instruction and they were not pleased with their teachers' method of teaching listening. Another important point highlighted in their responses was their probable indifference to learning how to listen. More than half of the learners agreed that a listening activity is merely a matter of listening to the recording and do the tasks without any more conversations with their peers as well as the teacher. In fact, there are generally some learners who like more interactive classes while listening in the classroom and they

suffer from less energetic and boring atmosphere.

#### Learners' Perceptions about Nursery Rhymes after the Treatment

As to the learners' perceptions after the treatment sessions, their responses to the interview showed that they were satisfied with the use of nursery rhymes in teaching listening to pave the way for their listening improvement, and they held positive beliefs accordingly. In order to completely analyze the data, it is of value to introduce the sub-categories of the learners' beliefs about nursery rhymes at the end of term.

#### c) Listening can be taught by nursery rhymes

Regarding the learners' belief change about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening, all the participants (n=15) agreed that nursery rhymes were so effective in that they felt improvement in listening skill since they were able to carry out the listening tasks and simultaneously interact with their peers and the teacher to improve their listening as well. The extract below shows one learners' positive belief about nursery rhymes at the end of the term:

#### Extract 3.

*"With the nursery rhymes, we could listen with lots of energy and do the listening exercise and speak about that, and talk to our friends. Listening in this way is good and interesting."*

It seems that the above learner had a positive impression in terms of listening practice occurred through nursery rhymes. An interesting point is that she mentioned 'nursery rhymes' signaling this fact that it might be for the first time that they had listened to nursery rhymes since it was not mentioned in the learners' initial perceptions. It can also be found that the participants paid a special attention to the role of having conversations during the listening practice, and they held positive perceptions about adopting nursery rhymes in teaching listening, paving the way for them to freely speak with their friends and teachers about the subject and enjoy the interaction taken place as a result of nursery rhymes.

#### d) Nursery rhymes are interesting in learning to listen

In line with changes in the young learners' perceptions in using nursery rhymes in teaching listening, it seems that teaching listening through nursery rhymes caused the majority of the participants (n=13) to put much more weight on listening instruction through nursery rhymes in their responses to the interviews.

They seemed to understand the role nursery rhymes may play in teaching listening by providing an interesting learning context. As a vivid example, the following extract presents the importance of nursery rhymes and their usefulness in teaching listening:

#### Extract 4.

*"I think that listening is more important and interesting than speaking and ..... In my opinion, nursery rhymes were really helpful for us. They were very important for teaching and learning listening."*

The fact that they could experience a different listening classroom through nursery rhymes created a positive feeling in the learners' perception concerning the use of nursery rhymes in effective teaching of listening. With the two sub-categories explained above, it can be easily found that teaching listening through nursery rhymes created a fruitful educational setting for the participants to learn how to listen in an interactive context resulting in raising a relative awareness in the young learners' perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening.

To sum up, the second research question aimed to find out whether teaching listening through nursery rhymes could bring about changes in the learners' simplistic beliefs about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening. Almost all the learners were not interested in learning to listen since it was boring for them. After receiving the treatment sessions, nearly all the participants in the experimental group changed their beliefs about nursery rhymes and they put much more emphasis on the their role in teaching listening since they assisted them in listening improvement and made the classroom more interactive creating an enjoyable environment for listening practice. The findings demand the implementation of nursery rhymes in teaching listening in the language classroom paving the way for both teachers and young learners to benefit from a an interesting and interactive learning context.

#### Investigation of the Third Research Question

The third research question of the study was to explore teachers' perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening. In fact, the purpose was to see whether the teachers were aware of benefiting from nursery rhymes in language learning or not. To go for the teachers' perceptions, the teachers' categorization of their perceptions included 1) improvement in teaching and learning language skills through nursery rhymes. In the following,



two teachers' interview extracts are provided to explain their perceptions thoroughly.

### Improvement in Teaching and Learning Language Skills through Nursery Rhymes

The five teachers of the present study were in favor of using nursery rhymes in teaching language skills. They believed that not only it paves the way for teachers to experience an almost new teaching paradigm regarding teaching listening and at the same time foster communication in the classroom. In this way, the learners may be more motivated in the classroom and they can feel more relaxed by listening to the rhythmic songs with educational purposes. The extracts are the teachers' interviews are explained in the following:

#### Extract 1.

*"I think that by nursery rhymes the learners' motivation toward learning will reinforced since they are experiencing happy times with their classmates. When happiness was created, the learners feel more relaxed, which positively affects their performance."*

#### Extract 2.

*"I had an experience of benefiting from nursery rhymes in teaching listening. It was completely helpful in creating an energetic learning environment, which can help teachers to encourage the learners to have more interaction and improve their listening ability."*

The above extracts highlighted the positive perceptions held by the participant teachers regarding the use of nursery rhymes in teaching listening. This might denote their awareness of how to apply nursery rhymes effectively in listening classroom to take advantage of energetic learning environment, particularly for young language learners.

To sum up the findings of the study, through the use of nursery rhymes learners could improve their listening ability. Moreover, students' perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening have gradually been changing as the treatment went on. Finally, the teachers, similar to their students, held positive perceptions about the efficient use of nursery rhymes in teaching listening.

### 5. Discussion

The present study was an attempt to look into the effect of nursery rhymes on the young learners' listening ability. Moreover, the learners as well as the teachers' perceptions about using nursery rhymes in teaching listening were investigated as well. Findings revealed that nursery rhymes resulted in significant improvement in the young learners' listening ability.

Qualitative analysis of the learners' interview data highlighted their positive perceptions about using rhymes in teaching listening. Teachers also held positive and realistic perceptions regarding the effective use of nursery rhymes in teaching listening.

The literature suggests that rhythmic songs could bring about improvement in the learners' improvement in language skills (e.g. Bodden, 2010; Dunst & Gorman, 2011), however, since little to no research has been done regarding the impact of nursery rhymes on the learners', particularly young ones, improvement in listening ability, the study can highlight the novel and efficient use of nursery rhymes in paving the way for young language learners to improve their listening ability.

Generally, findings of the study can be in alignment with those of Gauthier and Lejeune (2008) and Kelly (2000) who attempted to maneuver on the effectiveness of nursery rhymes on the language learning process. In fact, the studies were aimed at putting much emphasis on the role of songs in language learning in general.

Changes in the learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening can be in line with research done by Kern (1995) and Peng (2011) in which they explored changes in the learners' perceptions about language learning during the course of time, while the present study looked into the learners' perceptions about nursery rhymes in teaching listening, which seems to have not been taken into account yet.

### 6. Conclusion

Concerning the research done on the relationship between nursery rhymes and teaching listening, there were some research concentrating on general understanding of nursery rhymes (e.g. Ratnasari, 2007; Rgers, 2003) and the possible effect of them on the learners' language learning process (Bodden, 2010), demanding more studies to be done to find out the effect of nursery rhymes on the learners' listening ability as well as look into both learners and teachers' perceptions of nursery rhymes in teaching listening. Therefore, the study was done to cover the above-mentioned issues. The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Quantitative results of the listening pre- and post- test scores of the learners in the experimental and control group showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group after the

treatment (i.e. teaching listening through nursery rhymes), indicating that the instruction was quite successful in helping the learners to improve their listening skill.

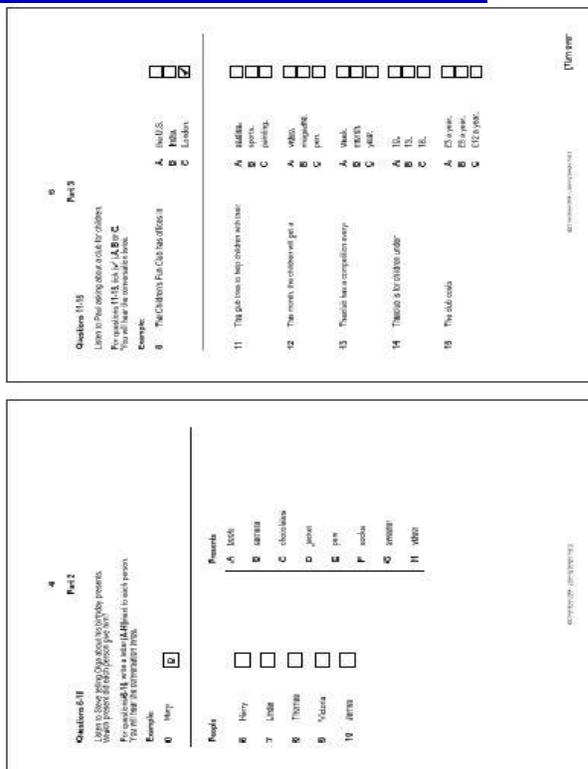
2. The study, to a large extent, demonstrated that nursery rhymes can be taken into account at the service of teaching listening in the context of meaningful interaction and implicitly attract the learners' attention toward the listening task.

3. It was also found that almost all the students seemed to initially have simplistic perceptions about using nursery rhymes in listening instruction and were not interested in listening since it was boring for them. After receiving the treatment sessions of nursery rhyme in listening intervention, nearly all the participants in the experimental group changed their beliefs about using nursery rhymes.

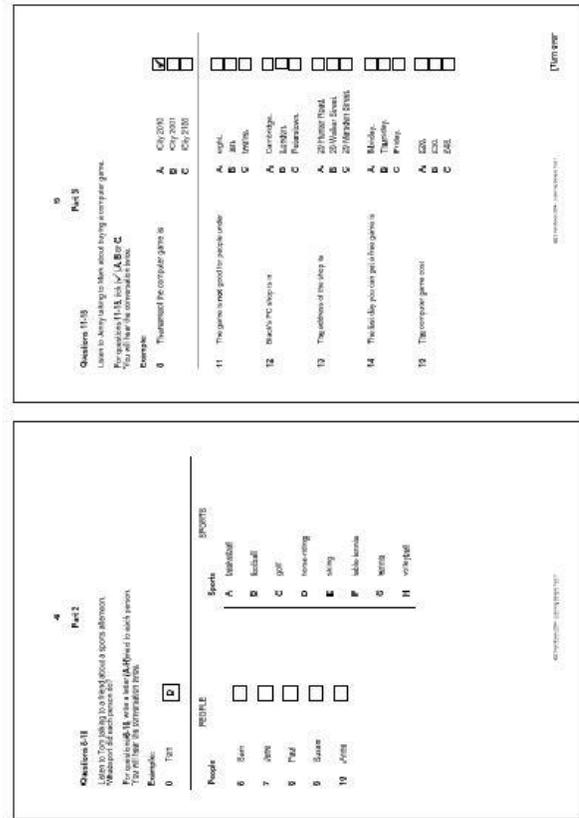
4. Teachers' perceptions about listening instruction through nursery rhymes showed that they were in favor of its application in the classroom since it can help them to have better interaction with the students.

Findings of the study also suggest an effective method for comprehensive program of listening instruction in young language learners particularly at elementary level. Using nursery rhymes in teaching listening can be adopted to other ages and proficiency levels, and to other second or foreign language setting as well.

**Appendix 1: samples of the Pre-Test**



**Appendix 2. Sample of the Post-Test**



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