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Theme

**The Significance of English
Rhythm and the Contribution of
English Songs in Enhancing the
Foreign Learner's Command of
English Rhythm: a Rhetorical
Study, the Case of Mostaganem
University Students.**

**BA project submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for a BA in English**

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of most foreign learners of English is to sound like the native speakers of that very tongue and display a certain degree of fluency and naturalness as they speak English. In order to achieve such a goal, generally, the majority of foreign learners centre their attention on the actualization of individual segments and strive to realize them in a native-like manner. However, most of them seem to ignore that a native-like realization of English speech lies as much in the mastery of its supra-segmental features as in that of its segments. One supra-segmental feature; in particular, is said to procure a native touch to the speech of a foreign learner in English; this supra-segmental feature is dubbed rhythm.

Despite the fact that rhythm is less commonly heeded to in EFL learning and teaching alike if compared to stress and intonation, it remains; nevertheless, a significant element to learn and master in order to reach a comprehensive naturalness while interacting in English. As indicated by Roach; “*Rhythm is not an optional extra; it is all part of the prosodic package of being native speaker in English.*” (**Rhythm and Production: A Lecture by Peter Roach.** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh-flp6ATI>). Similarly, Patel (2008:97) claimed:

“Speaking a language with native fluency requires more than mastering its phonemes, Vocabulary and grammar. One must also master the patterns of timing and accentuation that characterize the flow of syllables in sentences”.

The previous lines may lead one to ask such questions as: What is rhythm? Why is it so important to learn and master English rhythm? And if it is that important what can a foreign learner do to better his mastery of English rhythm?

The circumstances and motives that inspired the selection of the present work’s theme could be summed up in the ensuing lines. Initially, the bulk of studies relating to rhythm highlight the rhythmic anomalies of foreign speakers of English by contrasting their emission of English speech to that of English native speakers. Indeed, a limited number of studies attempt to seek the reasons behind such rhythmic anomalies, and a few of them suggest remedies to fill this rhythmic lack. Furthermore, in the case of Mostaganem University, which is a sample of EFL institutions in Algeria, where rhythm is a disregarded prosodic feature, some students ignore what rhythm refers to; some others are not even aware about the existence of such an item as rhythm and others believe it is another appellation of intonation.

The ultimate aim of the present research work is to indicate that English rhythm is a succinct prosodic feature the ignorance and neglect of which are at the roots of much of the difficulties that a foreign learner faces while producing English connected speech. Furthermore, this research work attempts to prove that listening to English songs of any musical genre and in any English variety is one of the most effective means that fosters naturalness and fluency to the flow of a foreign learner's speech and enhances his rhythmic command of the English language.

This research work was planned in such a manner as to elucidate the notion of English rhythm, reveal its role and importance, and suggest listening to English songs as one of the most efficient means that may improve the rhythmic mastery of a foreign learner. Hence, this research work consists of three chapters embedding both theory and practice relevant to this research work's theme.

The first chapter provides the reader with background knowledge about rhythm in its wide sense. Indeed, it is elementary for a foreign learner to be informed about the origin, nature and reasons behind the existence of rhythm as well as its diverse manifestations.

The second chapter elucidates the notion of English rhythm, revealing its major components, namely its structure and pattern as well as the sub-constituents of its structure and pattern, being respectively the syllable and the foot, stress and timing. Moreover, in this chapter the significance of knowing and mastering English rhythm is brought to the fore.

The last chapter is parsed to two parts, a theoretical and a practical. In this chapter the advantages of music and English songs in bettering the rhythmic mastery of a foreign learner are scrutinized and backed up by the analyses of the findings of two questionnaires respectively directed to fourth-year students of English at Mostaganem University and teachers of English at the same university.

This research work's conclusion encompasses a set of suggestions that are directed to teachers, stakeholders and curriculum developers and another set of suggestions which are addressed to English language students at university level. The key concerns of these suggestions are the importance of English rhythm for the foreign learner and the contribution of listening to English songs in enhancing the foreign learner's command of English rhythm.

The constraint of time impeded this research work from heeding to all aspects of English rhythm, and further reinforcing the suppositions and rhetoric set in this same work. Therefore, this work is far from being exhaustive.