

Singing helps students tune into a foreign language, study shows

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Singing in a foreign language can significantly improve learning how to speak it, according to a new study.

Adults who listened to short Hungarian phrases and then sang them back performed better than those who spoke the phrases, researchers found.

People who sang the phrases back also fared better than those who repeated the phrases by speaking them rhythmically.

Three randomly assigned groups of twenty adults took part in a series of five tests as part of a study conducted by researchers at the University of Edinburgh's Reid School of Music.

The singing group performed the best in four of the five tests.

In one test, participants who learned through singing performed twice as well as participants who learned by speaking the phrases.

Those who learned by singing were also able to recall the Hungarian phrases with greater accuracy in the longer term.

Hungarian was chosen because it is unfamiliar to most English speakers and a difficult language to master, with a completely different structure and sound system to the Germanic or Romance languages, such as Spanish and French.

Dr Karen M. Ludke, who conducted the research as part of her PhD at the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Music in Human and Social Development, said: "This study provides the first [experimental evidence](#) that a listen-and-repeat singing method can support [foreign language](#) learning, and opens the door for future research in this area. One question is whether [melody](#) could provide an extra cue to jog people's [memory](#), helping them recall foreign words and phrases more easily."

The study is published today in the journal *Memory & Cognition*.

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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