



THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SONGS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM AND REASONS FOR THIS

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Annotation

Nowadays, a lot of attention is paid to teaching foreign languages in fast and modern ways. This scientific article informs about the importance, impact and different reasons of using songs on teaching EFL classes and also ways to use songs in EFL classroom.

Keywords: Chris Boyd Brewer, cognitive reasons, non-communicative environment, colloquial English, suggestopaedia, Georgi Lozanow's method.

Introduction

Using music when teaching English can be beneficial for non-native English speaking students as well as fluent speakers. In his book "Music and Learning," Chris Boyd Brewer explains, "The intentional use of music in the classroom will set the scene and learning atmosphere to enhance our teaching and learning activities." Implementing the use of familiar or easy-to-learn songs is a great way to introduce principles of speaking, hearing and understanding the English language.

Songs are appreciated for their linguistic, pedagogical, cultural and entertaining features and they are precious language learning materials. They can be used to teach and develop every aspect of a language. This paper aims to verify these claims and confirm the effectiveness of using songs as a means to improve young learners' English





language vocabulary and to determine whether songs influence young learners' motivation to learn English. The paper deals with theoretical explanations of young learners, listening skills, and different aspects of using and teaching songs. It also discusses how songs influence motivation and the connection of songs with some language learning theories. The analytical part of the paper explains the procedure and the results obtained from the pre-tests, post-tests and delayed tests for three different children's songs as well as from the questionnaire that was done in order to collect information about motivation provided by songs. The results showed that songs have a positive influence on vocabulary retention of young learners. Whatever setting is used, aural or aural/visual, the results prove that songs are suitable for different learning styles, they encourage positive learning experience, and enhance their knowledge. Songs aid motivation and help learners develop a love for language learning. Students motivated in this way are imaginative, creative, and eager to learn and succeed.

Music has always been a vast part in people's lives: it is ubiquitous, it surrounds us everywhere, and it is broadly accepted all around the world. Regardless of the extent to which the capacity and sensitivity to music are programmed in the human brain or are by-products of other authorities and tendencies in the culture of music, without a doubt it plays a fully central and fundamental role. Songs have been part of the human experience for as long as we can remember. Adults sing at religious services, bars, in the shower, and listening to the car radio. Songs have become an integral part of our language experience, and if used in coordination with a language lesson they can be of great value. Fortunately, with the expanding prevalence of the Internet and specifically the World Wide Web into both the classrooms and lives of students, access to music and lyrics has been made easier. This paper will focus on the reasons for using songs by demonstrating their effectiveness as a learning tool. A large amount of literature which discusses the value of using songs in ESL/EFL classrooms is not empirically based. However, based upon teacher experience, the first hand knowledge of what actually occurs in a language classroom is, in fact, very valuable. The first step in developing a theoretical rationale for using songs in the classroom is to label the types of listening processes and then identify the reasons teachers and researchers provide. From here, we can see that the teachers' motives are actually grounded in theory. Patterns emerge from the literature as to why teachers and researchers find using songs valuable. These patterns include affective reasons, cognitive reasons, and





linguistic reasons. There are two processes involved in listening, and both can be utilized when songs are used in the classroom. The activity which is selected for a particular song will determine which of these processes is active. The first is bottom-up processing where the listener builds up the sounds into words, sentences and meaning. The second is top-down processing where the listener uses background knowledge to understand the meaning of a message. Practicing both of these processes is essential for developing listening comprehension. The affective, cognitive, and linguistic reasons for using songs which follow, are all grounded in learning theory, and provide insights into the benefits of songs in the classroom. It seems that the passion for music is deeply rooted in human nature. We the people, we are a species to a lesser extent in music or speaking. Presently, avoiding music is not an easy task, for it belongs to many aspects of life. Various kinds of music may be heard in almost every place and during performing important events. Seeing school, it is said that using songs during classes is not so popular. It is perceived in that way because for majority people listening to music is connected with spare time, not with working or learning. Music may be found in every human culture. Namely, we can hear it almost everywhere: while listening to the radio, when watching television and on different family occasions, such as birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, at a funeral, in restaurants, shops, cars, and even in the streets. The authors define music as, on the one hand strange, but on the other hand, a marvellous phenomenon since it has been for such a long time and still surrounds people. It is common knowledge that music can create a wide range of feelings. Moreover, music is so accepted that people all over the world pay a lot of money for musical business. People may naturally make use of music and songs for their own behoves in everyday life. Primarily, they may simply listen to music at any time and at any place. Next, there is a possibility to sing without listening to any recording. Still, some people like humming or whistling while listening to a piece of music. Not only people listen, but they also talk about it, as music seems to be quite a common topic especially among teenagers who share their opinions about the latest news connected with artists or brand-new video clips they have recently seen. Some people find it useful to use songs and music to make a social environment, form a feeling of partnership or just dance. All of the cases mentioned above show that music is really important phenomenon in our lives because it may be with us everywhere, whether we want it or not. Definitely, it has been with people for long times and has become part of our habitual lives.





Very often music is the main source of English outside the classroom. Thus, using it in the lesson seems to be a good idea. There can be distinguished affective and cognitive rationale for playing a song during a lesson. As a matter of fact, affective reasons are connected with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. In short, it gives an explanation why some learners learn and others do not. The crucial thing is that students need to develop a positive attitude towards learning has it that, for effective learning the affective filter is must be weak. A weak affective filter means that a positive attitude to learning is present. Hence teachers' task is to provide a positive atmosphere favourable for learning. In this aspect music and songs may be one of the methods for obtaining weak affective filter. Eken enumerates eight reasons for the use of song in a language classroom. Firstly, a song may be used to present a topic, new vocabulary or a language point. Then, it may also be used as a practice of lexis. Beyond question, songs can be used as a material for extensive and intensive listening. Some teachers may use them to focus on frequent learner errors in a more indirect way.[1] Not to mention that songs are a perfect source for stimulating discussions about feelings and attitudes. Learners may talk over with another in pairs or in small groups what happened in the song and then share their opinions with the rest of students. Additionally, songs may arrange a relaxed classroom atmosphere and contribute to fun and variety in language teaching. Finally, songs may be said to encourage the use of imagination and creativity during foreign language lessons. Songs also give a chance to develop automaticity which is the main cognitive reason for using songs in the classroom. Automaticity is defined as a component of language fluency which involves both knowing what to say and producing language rapidly without pauses. To put it in other words, songs may help automatize the language improvement process. Essentially, the students should be placed in an environment in which it is possible to use the target language in a communicative way. As a matter of fact, the nature of songs is said to be quite repetitive, logical and persistent. Affective Reasons The Affective Filter Hypothesis is one of five proposed hypotheses developed by Steven Krashen. Basically, it is an explanation of how the affective factors relate to language learning. It is particularly appealing to teachers because it provides an explanation to why some learners learn and others do not.

Cognitive Reasons. Songs also present opportunities for developing automaticity which is the main cognitive reason for using songs in the classroom. Gatbonton and Segalowitz define automaticity as a component of language fluency which involves





both knowing what to say and producing language rapidly without pauses. Using songs can help automatize the language development process. Traditionally, it was believed that automatization would occur through repetitive exercises in a non-communicative environment. However, the major shift towards the communicative teaching methodology requires that automatization occur in a different manner. Gatbonton and Segalowitz state that we must place students in an environment in which it is appropriate to use target utterances in a genuinely communicative fashion. The nature of songs is fairly repetitive and consistent. For example, a song such as Sailing by Rod Stewart provides ample opportunities for students to focus on the present progressive tense. The repetitive style of the song lends itself to an activity in which students create their own present progressive sentences based upon their own interest.[2] After listening to the song, students create their own lyrics following the same tune as the song. Lyrics such as, I am writing, I am writing, in my notebook with my friends, are common examples of the type of language that students produce. Linguistic Reasons. Besides automatization, there is also a linguistic reason for using songs in the classroom. Some songs are excellent examples of colloquial English, that is, the language of informal conversation. A song such as "My Best Was Never Good Enough" by Bruce Springsteen is a prime example of a song that demonstrates colloquial language use. This song is full of phrases like every cloud has a silver lining. and Every dog has his day. Of course, the majority of language most ESL students will encounter is in fact informal. Using songs can prepare students for the genuine language they will be faced with. Finally, two studies, Domoney and Harris and Little investigated the prevalence of pop music in the lives of EFL students. Both studies found that music is often the major source of English outside of the classroom. The exposure to authentic English is an important factor in promoting language learning. It relates directly to both the affective filter and automaticity. If students are exposed to songs which they enjoy, more learning is likely to occur since they may seek out the music outside of the classroom. The repetitive style of songs then helps to promote automatization of colloquial language. Songs almost always contain authentic, natural language. This often contrasts the contrived, stilted language found in many student texts. Of course songs can also go to the other extreme by using overly crude, foul or otherwise objectionable language. With careful screening, an extensive library of usable songs for language learning can be compiled. A variety of new vocabulary can be introduced to students through songs.





Looking to boost student vocabulary with useful phrases, vocabulary and expressions? Songs are almost always directed to the native-speaking population so they usually contain contemporary vocabulary, idioms and expressions. Songs are usually very easily obtainable. Cibemba and Silozi notwithstanding, songs are usually not that difficult to obtain. Local sources may be available including the students themselves. There's always the internet which can connect you with song downloads in all but the most obscure languages. Songs can be selected to suit the needs and interests of the students In English especially, so many songs are available that selection of songs with suitable themes, levels and vocabulary is not at all difficult. Allowances can also be made for complexity or simplicity of language, depending on the students, by selecting and using suitable songs. Grammar and cultural aspects can be introduced through songs. Most if not all songs have a recurring theme or story. So excerpting cultural elements is usually a possible, but often overlooked aspect of using songs. I still use "Hit the Road Jack" sung by the late Ray Charles to illustrate spoken contractions. He uses spoken contractions is virtually every line of the song. Time length is easily controlled Whether you have an hour, 30 minutes, or only 15 minutes or so, a song can be used in the course of a planned lesson. Use of songs is very flexible. Students can experience a wide range of accents. A good thing about songs is that you can expose the students to many different kinds of English. British English, American English, Caribbean English are all widely available through songs. Accents too are well represented by songs from different regions and in a variety of types and formats. Gospel, soul, R & B, Pop, Rock, Reggae, Jazz and other styles change not only accents, but vocabulary and usage too. Song lyrics can be used in relating to situations of the world around us Songs have been used as vehicles of protest for civil rights, workers' rights, even prisoners' rights along with an untold number of other causes. They've expounded on pollution, crime, war and almost every social theme or cause. We won't even mention how many songs are about, related to or explore the theme of sex. Students think songs are natural and fun Well actually they are, aren't they? Fun, even silly songs abound in English. Some singers actually made a career out of them. They make offbeat, fun changes of pace with classroom use. These are only some of the many reasons songs are useful in the language learning classroom. They contain authentic language, are easily obtainable, provide vocabulary, grammar and cultural aspects and are fun for the students. They provide enjoyable speaking, listening, vocabulary and language practice both in and out of the classroom. So EFL, English





as a foreign language, ESL, English as a Second language and foreign language teachers should all consider using songs as a regular part of their classroom activities. Some teachers might not be aware of possibilities of using songs in the classroom. They may feel that such activities are not appropriate for classes which often cause discipline problems. To add more, lecturers may think that using music may create chaos or students may be reluctant to sing. Stanislawczyk and Yavener are of the opinion that a song is an advantageous tool and a teacher should take advantage of it during linguistic practice. She also emphasizes the importance of the engagement learners get when listening to songs or creating own lyrics, In the era when guitar players are ubiquitous, music must be an integral part of language study. It is a part of classroom activities from the start of the work in language, supplying additional language learning and cultural insights. At the advanced level, students become even more actively involved in music by creating songs.[3] The passage below attempts to present rationale for using song activities in English foreign language classrooms. Fundamentally, popular songs touch the lives of learners, and are connected with their various interests and everyday experiences. Almost all popular songs are related to the same topic of friendship, love, dream, sorrow, and the rest which are the common feelings of people. Since most young people nowadays are interested in a wide range of cultural forms outside classes, songs may be a really motivating and unique teaching tool. Experiencing with films, television, computer games and popular music seems to be highly motivating. Accordingly, more time and concentration to popular music in English foreign language classroom would surely increase learners' motivation as classroom tasks would reflect on their knowledge, their music and the vocabulary they already know from the songs. Although motivation is absolutely important in learning all school subjects, this is studying a foreign language that makes motivation play a huge role in, learning a language is a long-term process and learners are in charge of their learning at length. The students need to support their efforts for a long time, very often against numerous failures and difficulties. Another important factor making a song valuable for an English lesson is that it may create really favourable conditions for learning. It is use of the opinion that the use of music and songs can stimulate very positive associations to the study of a language, which otherwise may only be seen as a laborious task, entailing exams, frustration, and corrections. People usually identify songs with fun, which is why learning through songs is associated with an enjoyable atmosphere. Moreover, music may be used to





relax students since for many learning a new language is a new experience. Our mother tongue – our basis of communication, is in some classes forbidden to use and learners may feel lost or helpless. The author also adds that especially instrumental playing silently in the background makes students feel more secure when doing the task at the same time.

Songs played in the background when learners read some conversations, are typical of Suggestopaedia. This teaching method was invented by Georgi Lozanow in Bulgaria and its valuable element is music in the background. Essentially, the Suggestopaedia method involves the students' barriers and negative attitudes such as low self-esteem, anxiety or lack of motivation to learning. Meanwhile, students' learning occurs subconsciously and may be amusing for them as well. These are some important features of that teaching technique: a relaxed atmosphere, a classroom positive environment, a new identity of learners, or music activities themselves.

In conclusion, the song is a reflection of the existing picture in the world of native speakers, it reflects fears, anxieties, problems, joys, values, reflections, opinions, and therefore through the study of songs, another culture is more deeply comprehended. According to the experience of many teachers, songs help to solve many problems in teaching English. The songs help to eliminate the distance between the foreign teacher and students, quickly and easily learn new words and expressions, reduce stressful learning factors, reorganize lesson time, keep students attention focused on the topic currently presented, make studying complicated things easier, and increase students' motivation and passion for learning. With the help of music we can make the learning process and environment an easier, fun-filled, exciting, interesting and impactful place. As demonstrated, the three theoretical reasons are all intertwined and help to demonstrate the value of using songs in the classroom. The next step in the procedure is to successfully integrate the songs into a language lesson. Because of the Internet, access to music, lyrics, and activities has been simplified which makes it easy for the teacher to effectively use songs in the classroom.

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