

## SONGS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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**Rezumat.** *Articolul descrie importanța cântecului în predarea/învățarea limbii străine. Cântecul este considerat un instrument pedagogic de formare și dezvoltare a abilităților de vorbire, scriere, citire în limba țintă. Sunt menționate unele strategii de utilizare a cântecului în clasa de limbi care promovează dezvoltarea creativității, fluenței și interacțiunii.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *metodă, învățare, a dezvolta, cântece, tipuri.*

### Introduction

A song is poetry set to motion. A song in a second language enhances the learning of that target language. Songs and language share various characteristics. Both come from the processing of sounds. Authors or speakers use them in order to communicate a message, and they have intrinsic characteristics in common such as: pitch, volume, stress, tone, rhythm, and pauses. Besides, songs and language can be acquired by exposure.

Songs have been part of the human life for a long time. Nowadays, they are used in the human daily life, in different situations. For example, people listen to music and sing songs in bars, in the car radio, in the shower, etc. That is why, the use of songs is an essential part in the language experience. Consequently, using songs for the English language teaching learning process can be of great value.

According to Harmer (2007), students have to enjoy the listening material because if they can understand more or less the listening, without the intervention of a teacher, it will help them improve this skill. Scoth and Ytreberg (1995) stated that listening is the skill that children acquire first. That is why teachers have to provide enjoyable, easy, and relaxing material in order to improve the students' listening skill, such as songs.

Teachers should use songs as pedagogical tools. Teaching English, especially to young learners, has to be done in an enjoyable way, because most of the children like to listen to songs and sing. Murphey (quoted by Millington, 1992) states that songs can help young learners to improve their listening skills and pronunciation, therefore potentially helping them to improve their speaking skills.

The listening skill is the most important outcome of early language teaching and songs are regarded as one of the best ways to practice and develop the listening skills. It means, songs are considered one of the best techniques to develop the listening skill, especially to teach young learners [1].

## **Types of Songs**

The most important aspect for choosing a song is that teachers should like and feel willingly for sharing the song in front of the class. However, teachers have to choose the type of songs that will be presented in the class correctly. Hence, teachers have to know the different possible types of songs for an English class.

There are many kinds of songs that can be used in the classroom. Those are: nursely rhymes, jingles, folk songs, holiday songs, pop songs, and tongue twisters. Besides, there are a lot of songs written specially for the English language teaching learning process. But, in order to avoid students' boredom, teachers should choose original, modern, and stimulating songs. In that way, students can sing in and outside the classroom.

In addition, there are different types of music that can be used in order to teach from the easy to complex such as: rhythms and chants. One powerful and useful way to use chants and rhythms, according to Graham, C. (2010), is to use jazz rhythms or jazz chants in order to illustrate the natural stress and intonation patterns of conversational American English. It means, students can develop their listening skill by means of songs [2].

## **Previous Studies**

Smith, C. (2002) researched the effect of using songs in texts. It means, the students were involved hearing the text as songs. First, there were two groups: one that heard the text as a song and the other group heard the same text as speech. The group that heard the text as a song, at the moment to be tested, the students listened to the melody of the song. The results in this investigation were notable, the musical group showed higher scores than the normal group. Concluding that the use of songs in the foreign language may aid memory of text.

Arroyo, S. (2015) investigated the English language teaching methodologies in Senior High School students in Esmeraldas-Ecuador. The investigator found difficulties in the methodologies in order to improve the listening skill. As a result, she proposed a ludic methodology, mainly with songs for improving the student's listening skills.

Estupiñán E. (2015) stated the use of the ludic methodology to improve the English teaching-learning process in second graders at Velasco Ibarra School, in Esmeraldas - Ecuador. This investigation took into consideration games in order to improve students' learning. The researcher proposed a handbook with games supporting the students' textbook.

Caicedo, (2016) researched about the use of dramatization of realistic situations to improve the spoken English in Alfonso Quiñónez George Educational Institution in Esmeraldas – Ecuador. His investigation establishes the importance of using drama in the classroom, such as the motivation created by students' interest. The investigator proposed a booklet with six different activities for third level senior high school students.

## Reasons Why You Should Use Songs to Teach EFL

Language teachers can and should use songs as part of their classroom teaching repertoire. Songs contain authentic language, are easily obtainable, provide vocabulary, grammar and cultural aspects and are fun for the students.

They can provide valuable speaking, listening and language practice in and out of the classroom. Some key reasons songs can work exceedingly well in the foreign language classroom include the following:

- *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.

- *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 [3].

➤ **Why song is important in language teaching?**

Songs can be used as a valuable teaching and learning tool. Using songs can *help learners improve their listening skills and pronunciation*; they can also be useful for teaching vocabulary and sentence structures. Probably the greatest benefit to using songs in the classroom is that they are enjoyable.

➤ **How do songs help students learn?**

Studies have shown that music produces *several positive effects on a human's body and brain*. Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory.

➤ **Why are songs and rhymes important in language teaching and learning?**

Provision of meaningful vocabulary. Songs and rhymes present a lot of linguistic material in a natural linguistic context. So they support the monolingual and contextual approach in teaching a foreign language. Words in songs and rhymes are *meaningful to the learner*, which influences the acquisition in a positive way.

➤ **Why should teachers use songs and music in their lessons?**

Music builds a *supportive atmosphere*. Music helps teachers to create the right atmosphere in the classroom, supporting and motivating students to work hard, sparking their interest in learning tasks and helping them to focus. Music can wake up a sleepy classroom.

➤ **What are the advantages of using songs and games in language classroom?**

Games *help students make and sustain the effort of learning*.

Games provide language practice in the various skills – speaking, writing, listening and reading. They encourage students to interact and communicate. They create a meaningful context for language use.

➤ **What are the benefits of rhymes?**

*Rhymes promote language learning in several ways.*

For one, children hear how vowels and consonants sound when they listen to nursery rhymes. Rhymes demonstrate how to combine these sounds to form words. Rhymes also teach appropriate pitch, voice inflection, cadence, volume, and rhythm.

➤ **What can we learn from songs?**

*Music Teaches Patience and Discipline*

They say that the best things in life are worth waiting for. Through music, you can learn that they're also worth working for. Learning to play music requires us to work consistently for a good amount of time [4].

Singing is a wonderful tool to learn a language. Songs are filled with rhymes, sound patterns, alliterations etc. By learning a song a child will be aware of how sounds can be manipulated: you can repeat a sound and it will be funny, you can invent words, you can omit certain sounds or emphasise others etc. Singing is giving children the sound awareness skills that are critical to learning to read successfully. So sing with them, let them hear the song over and over again, you will be setting some excellent grounds for them to develop a love of language and excellent foundation for learning to read! [5].

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