

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SONGS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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**ABSTRACT:** The role played by songs on the language acquisition of young learners is incredible. Not only do the songs produce pleasure, but also they are able to highly improve process of learning and memorization. This is the reason why songs are being widely used in English teaching classrooms among the world. This article will mainly emphasize great potentiality of songs that can be usefully integrated into the lessons and help children acquire the new language more easily and naturally. The methodology of the paper is based on classroom observations, review of school documents and investigations of both teachers and students in high school. Findings have shown that songs can be used as valuable pedagogical tools for teaching English to young learners in an effort to enhance their learning skills in addition to providing sheer enjoyment.

**KEYWORDS:** young learners(YL), language acquisition, motivation, methodology, learning skills, ESL

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to children is considered to be challenging process that makes urgent to take into account their social and cognitive development. In order to accomplish this task, it is of huge importance to create funny atmosphere which is not distinctive from their natural surroundings. Songs are certainly one means among the other possible interesting activities, manage to provide such natural anxiety-free environment. Songs are a type of listening activity that has a capability to bring a broad potential for learning. It is peculiar feature of the songs that they are fun and keep student excited and eager to learning without burdening pressure on young learners. They contain language patterns which are helpful to develop a number of skills including listening, pronunciation, vocabulary and so on under the funny atmosphere. However repeating similar songs several times with their teachers, young students never feel bored. Furthermore, this type of activity is quite flexible that many aspects of the language can be conducted through the usage of songs in the form of gap fillers, warm-ups or main part of the lesson, regardless of the stage of the lesson whether –pre, -while or –post activity. Last but not least, they are estimated as a great source of motivation for children to learn English.

The basic ambition for learning English language is the development of communication skills, as well as maintaining interest and motivation for learning English. To meet these needs, it is necessary for the content to be closely related to learners' real life and materials have to be adjusted to different learning styles. It means that the lessons must abound with versatile activities. Songs are examples of such activities which influence the development of English in YL thanks to their nature, fun content and relaxing characteristics. Students are able not only to learn and practice different points of English through songs, but also satisfy the specific characteristics of their age. Due to their interest in songs, children can accept enthusiastically songs, if they are used for learning a language. One key factor is that children are not aware of the fact that they are learning through songs, and for this reason they see them as a pleasant and fun part of English lessons. In addition, songs serve as an effective source of pronunciation, intonation and accent, and a practice of listening skill and vocabulary enrichment.

One advantage of using songs in ESL classrooms is their flexibility. Songs can be used for a number of purposes and there are many reasons why songs can be considered as valuable pedagogical tools. Songs can help children improve their listening skills and pronunciation, thus potentially helping them to enhance their speaking skills( Murphey, 1992). Songs can also be productive means in the learning of vocabulary, sentence structures, and sentence patterns, without mentioning their reflectivity of the mother tongue culture (Murphey, 1992). Basically, the major benefit of using songs is that they are more energetic and funny. Pleasure for its own sake is an integral part of learning a language, they can provide interest to the classroom and potentially improve students motivation.

Using appropriate songs is of paramount importance. Whether they are specially written for learning English or authentic, it is crucial to choose songs that suit children's level of English as well as their interest since, as widely accepted, children enjoy simple and catchy songs. The love of repetition and the need to move, common to all young children, make songs important parts of English lessons. Ur (1992:65) makes the distinction between the specially composed English teaching songs and authentic ones. She explains that the former is used to teach vocabulary and language structures and production of oral language while the latter one is a matter of cultural aspect and entertainment.

It has been proven that nothing can be as effective as music in children's language class. When children do not pay attention to boring instructions in a language class as they are unaware of the significance of learning a language they learn, songs can be used accordingly. They learn a language very naturally if they enjoy what they are doing in the class. It has been said that children have a natural taste for music and because of that English language teachers around the world use such enjoyable and supportive means for children to enhance language learning and acquisition. (Cakir, 1999). Purcell (1992) mentions that students may become bored by repeatedly listening to a narration or dialog as they attempt to understand the meaning of new words or phrases in context. However, listening to a song over and over again can seem to be less monotonous because of its rhythm and melody. Such songs as "Hello" include common expressions and can be employed as good listening activities. For example, the teacher could sing the first three lines of the song below, and children could respond with the following three lines:

Hello,

Hello,

Hello, how are you?

I am fine,

I am fine,

I hope that you are, too.

Children are often keen to learn how to make new sounds and this can require much more practice. Some teachers use minimal-pair drills, nevertheless, they are of little interest for young learners. Song, on the other end of the scale, allow children to practice a new sound without producing the same level of boredom. Songs also possess a natural rhythm with a recurring beat that is similar to the stress patterns of spoken English. These patterns make some songs useful for practicing rhythm and stress. Moriya (1988) emphasizes the value of using songs for pronunciation practice with Asian learners of English due to the phonemic difference between Asian languages and English. For example, there are several problematic points for the Japanese students learning English. Ohata (2004) shows the difference in vowels, consonants and syllable types that cause difficulties for Japanese English learners. Through practicing diversity of sounds by singing songs is interesting and enjoyable compared to other traditional activities as minimal-pair drills.

The other beneficial aspect of using songs for English lessons can be seen on vocabulary terms. They are usually based around the theme or topic that provides the context for vocabulary learning. The song of "Head, Shoulders, Knees" for instance, can be productive to review body parts. Many of the songs of children have the peculiarity of monosyllabic words, most of which are frequently repeated. This is a force for good to have greater exposure to these words and can help to improve vocabulary acquisition.

Probably the most obvious advantage of using songs for YL classroom is that they are great source of enjoyment. More often than not, many children have a particularly liking for singing. Not only do songs provide funny atmosphere, but also, they can bring a number of benefits. Initially, songs can bring variety to the everyday classroom routine. And this stimulates interest and attention, which help to maintain classroom motivation, thus, helping learners to reach higher levels of achievement. By reducing anxiety, songs increase students' interest and encourage them to acquire language. Students often think of songs as entertainment rather than study and that is why find learning English through songs fun and enjoyable.

A large number of activities can be used with songs. Any aspect of the language can be adapted with songs. Whether it is one of four skills, vocabulary or grammar, can be modified to be used with songs. And it works well with young learners than adults via activities, namely, "Listen and do (Sevik, 2012)," Listen and repeat" (Scott and Ytreberg, 1991) such as listen and draw, mime, dance, point, match and color.

All teachers can have their own way to use songs in the lesson. No matter how the lesson is taught, basic way to reach success through songs is application. It means that the presentation and activities have to suit learners' characteristics, their mastery of language and their interests. To accomplish this task, some techniques need to be applied as follows:

- Set the context
- Use visual aids to introduce new vocabulary
- Play or sing the song to familiarize students with it
- Do further listening activity
- Practice pronunciation ( intonation, rhythm and stress)
- Inspire children to repeat actions
- Repeat songs more times
- Provide students with written form of the song as it can be applied for a number of activities.

It is of utmost importance to teach the language ignoring target language structures and let young learners learn and discover the language by themselves. The language should be presented at an attainable rate and connect previous words and structures to the ones which will be learned in the coming future. They first recognize the new language forms, and they want to learn them since they need them for the activity they like. Thus they try to understand the words by discovering their meanings. And they use this new language and connect it with other words from the song. By this way children develop positive attitude and willingness to learn.

The results has proven general consensus that songs have a positive impact on young learners language acquisition, for songs are suitable for different learning styles, they encourage positive learning experience and thus enhance their knowledge not to mention their role as a motivator. It makes the view clear that it is crucial for language teachers to create inspiring and inspiring atmosphere so as to increase motivation of young learners. Students motivated in this way are imaginative, creative and eager to learn to develop love for language learning.

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