

USING ENGLISH SONGS TO IMPROVE YOUNG LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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Listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. Of the four major areas of communication skills and language development – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – the one that is the most basic is listening. Children listen and respond to the language before they learn to talk. In first and second language acquisition, listening is the initial stage. The promotion of children's speaking and listening skills lies at the heart of effective learning in all subjects of the primary curriculum. In the classroom, students have to listen carefully and attentively to lectures and class discussions to understand and retain the information they have received.

The four language skills, listening skill is the most difficult one to develop. Therefore, special attention and more time should be devoted to the teaching of such a basic skill. However, it seems that listening is not covered adequately in the curriculum even though 55% of our lives are spent listening. Active listening skills have to be an integral part of the learning environment to help students become lifelong learners.

Songs are appreciated for their linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and entertaining features. They are precious language learning materials that can be used to teach and develop every aspect of a language. English songs bring energy to the classroom and boost students' confidence. If the students are interested both in material and teaching, they can enjoy listening. Moreover, the many-faceted merits songs possess may enrich and activate our foreign language class. Georgi Lozanov incorporates music into his teaching method— Suggestopedia, for music is instrumental in creating a relaxing and comfortable environment, which can propel language learning (as cited by Larsen-Freeman, 1985) their mind. Futon in Arevalo (2010) said that songs can also provide a relaxed lesson. They also can form the basis for many lessons. English songs are a great language pack that bundles a culture, vocabulary, listening, grammar, and several other language skills in just a few poems. It can be used for a wide range of English for teaching and learning foreign languages. This also was supported by Shen (2009) "being a combination of music and language, songs have innumerable virtues that deserve our attention. Their richness in culture and themes, their idiomatic and poetic expressions, their therapeutic functions, and so on makes them an impeccable tool for language teaching". So, utilizing songs in the classroom can relax students' minds and bodies and can make them listening more enjoyable.

Songs and Young Learners

The most prominent features of songs that reinforce language acquisition include their rhythmic and repetitive nature and the joy that the association between melody and content brings to the learning activity. Children have a keen awareness of rhythm, and they have not yet experienced the anxiety that can accompany learning a second language. Therefore, there are many advantages of using songs in YL ESL/EFL classrooms, the most striking ones are the following.

Songs Are Keys to Primary Practice

Most primary school teachers generally use songs as a teaching technique, and Cameron, (2001) claimed that the use of songs and rhymes is also important for YLs in foreign language classrooms. Likewise, Johnstone (2002) claimed that teachers of YLs may make an important contribution to children's early language education by introducing their classes to recorded songs. Demirel (2004) made the strongest claim when he argued that the most effective way to teach listening comprehension, pronunciation, and dictation to YLs was through teaching songs.

Songs Provide Opportunities for Real Language Use

According to Sharpe (2001), songs provide an occasion for real language use in a fun and enjoyable situation. She claims that singing is a vital part of the life of a young child, inside and outside the school, and incorporating the foreign language into this fundamental activity is another way of normalizing it. Young children readily imitate sounds and often pleasurably associate singing and playing with rhythms and rhymes from an early age. Schoepp (2001) believed that the three following patterns emerge from the research on why songs are valuable in the ESL/EFL classroom:

a. Affective reasons: A positive attitude and environment enhance language learning. Songs are an enjoyable activity that contributes to a supportive, non-threatening setting with confident and active learners.

b. Cognitive reasons: Songs contribute to fluency and the automatic use of meaningful language structures.

c. Linguistic reasons: In addition to building fluency, songs provide exposure to a wide variety of authentic language that students will eventually face in nonacademic settings.

Consequently, meeting the learning needs of young learners to improve their listening comprehension is a big job, one that requires the coordination and collaboration of the educational system. This means that everyone must support the teaching of listening skills through authentic materials, particularly songs. Furthermore, most of the available practical recommendations are subject to situational constraints: that is they lack universal generalization and application cannot, therefore, be prescribed without adapting them to particular learning situations in which they are to be used.

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