

USING ENGLISH SONGS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS (EYLs)

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Abstract: *English songs can be used for teaching English skills to young learners. The advantage of the English songs is they are authentic materials which represent real, native cultures. The way of teaching English by using the songs is by employing several steps of teaching namely pre-listening, whilst-listening, and post-listening activities.*

Keywords: *English songs, English for Young Learners (EYLs)*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in schools throughout Indonesia has adopted various teaching methods and media. The use of both methods and media have been becoming a serious issue in language teaching. The reason is because there are hundreds of different methods and media that can be implemented and used in different levels of EFL classrooms. However, the methods and media should be used widely in teaching a particular course. An EFL teacher has to consider whether the media, that is to say, is appropriate for being used in their classroom. If not, the teacher doesn't have to implement such media as it won't really help them achieve the course objectives.

English consists of several skills namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The four skills

are different in term of contents and process. Therefore, the use of appropriate media for each skill does increase the quality of teaching and learning process. One of the four skills that needs a suitable media is speaking skill. EFL learners learn speaking skill because they have to speak English like native speakers of English. To achieve that goal, one of a good media for teaching speaking skill is English songs. The English songs are songs that are produced and delivered by native speakers to entertain people in the world. Surely, the language used is real English; the grammar of the songs is all grammatical and contextual; and the themes that cover the English songs are created based on the real English cultures. So, the songs can be used for EFL learners to learn real English or else they can also entertain themselves.

This paper seeks to describe the types of English songs, their advantages for language teaching, particularly in teaching speaking skill. This paper also describes some factors that consider the songs are disadvantageous for being used in teaching speaking course. The analysis is not only focused on the use of English songs for young learners in junior and senior high schools, but also in higher education context such as a college. Comparing the use of English songs among different levels of education highlights how the songs become more appropriate for EFL learners.

ENGLISH SONGS

Songs are important teaching tools in teaching MFLs because as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in the language classroom. Students often hold strong views about music and students who

are usually quiet can become very talkative when discussing it. Thus, the main goal of modern foreign language teaching- communication- can actually take place (Cullen, 1998). Singing is definitely one of the most effective language learning strategies reported by most children.

Klein (2005), for example, who provides a comprehensive account of teaching English to eight- to ten- year-old German pupils at the beginning level, argues that teaching YLs is different from teaching adults. Young children tend to change their mood every other minute, and they find it extremely difficult to sit still. On the other hand, they show a greater motivation than adults to do things that appeal to them. Therefore, the language teacher has to be inventive in selecting interesting activities, and must provide a great variety of them. On this matter Klein, (op. cit.) reports

that her experience shows that children respond enthusiastically to songs and welcome them.

ADVANTAGES OF ENGLISH SONGS

Schoepp (2001) believes that the following three patterns emerge from the research on why songs are valuable in the ESL/EFL classroom. Affective reasons: A positive attitude and environment enhance language learning. Songs are an enjoyable activity that contribute to a supportive, non-threatening setting with confident and active learners. Cognitive reasons: Songs contribute to fluency and the automatic use of meaningful language structures. Linguistic reasons: In addition to building fluency, songs provide exposure to a wide variety of the authentic language students will eventually face in non-academic settings.

Kirsch (2008) points out that many language teachers have described the benefits of using rhymes, songs and games in foreign language classes as follows. Rhymes, poems and songs are very popular with young language learners who tend to be familiar with this type of literacy from school or home. Children do not shy away from poems and songs in foreign languages; Teachers are equally familiar with them and thus may find them a good way into the teaching of foreign languages; They promote positive feelings; The rhythmical patterns facilitate and accelerate learning; They are good means of developing listening, pronunciation and speaking skills. Pupils do not tire of listening to and repeating them over and over again. They join in with the parts they know and acquire more sounds, words and sentences with each successive performance until they

gradually master the text; These forms of literacy help pupils get into the rhythm of a language and learn to pronounce sounds and words confidently, accurately and with expression; Pupils are more likely to remember the new words and structures because they are repetitive, meaningful and presented in predictable patterns and larger chunks.

The internalization of sounds, words and sentence patterns brings learners a step closer to using these in other contexts; Rhymes, poems and songs can initiate a range of activities: listening, reading, drawing, performing actions, playing and enacting, performing in front of an audience and practicing intonation, pronunciation and structures; Poems or songs about typical traditions or cultural artifacts are helpful in developing pupils' cultural awareness and understanding; Besides, many

teachers take advantage of the popularity and repetitive structure of songs to practice key vocabulary in an enjoyable way. (p.85)

As pointed out by Çakır (1999) as well, music can be a wonderful medium for natural language learning. Songs are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life. Cameron (2001) claims that the use of songs and rhymes is also important for YLs in foreign language classrooms. Likewise, Johnstone (2002) claims that teachers of YLs may make an important contribution to children's early language education by introducing their classes to recorded songs. Demirel (2004) makes the strongest claim when he argues that the most effective way to teach listening comprehension, pronunciation, and dictation to YLs is through teaching songs.

According to Cullen (1998, 1999), songs are significant teaching tools in teaching ESL/EFL because, as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in the language classroom and they often hold strong views about music. This affinity with music makes songs vital tools to create a safe and natural classroom ethos and to overcome feelings of shyness and hesitation on the part of the learners.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES USING SONGS

Phillips (1993) points out that one way of presenting songs to YLs in a meaningful way is through incorporating some of the techniques from the Total Physical Response (TPR). She argues that this is an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in primary classes. With TPR the

children listen to their teacher telling them what to do, and then do it. She then argues that one effective way of presenting songs to young learners in a meaningful way is through incorporating some of the techniques from the TPR approach. She argues that this is an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in primary classes. Overall, there seems to be a consensus that a three-staged approach would be the most effective to this end. The stages generally recommended are: pre-teaching, while-teaching and post-teaching.

According to Linse (2006), there are a number of different ways that songs can be presented to children. Often the first step is to introduce any key vocabulary that may be unfamiliar. Props, such as real objects or pictures of objects, can be used to present the key vocabulary for

a song. Actions can also help children learn unfamiliar vocabulary. The props and actions not only help children remember the words and meanings of new words but also help children remember the context or situation depicted in the piece of verse. Once the key vocabulary has been presented, teachers find it useful to introduce YLs to pieces of verse one line at a time. The teacher says one line of the song using the props or actions that illustrate it, and then the children repeat the line. This procedure continues until all the lines of the targeted piece of verse have been said and repeated. Next, the learners repeat the entire selection of verse using props or actions to help them remember the words.

Lindsay and Knight (2006) suggest a three-staged planning of listening activities:

Pre-listening: these activities

should help learners by focusing their attention on the topic, activating any knowledge they have about the topic, and making it clear to the learners what they have to do while they listen, for example: helping the learners to develop their vocabulary related to the topic, making sure learners understand what they have to do while they are listening, i.e. do they have to do something, write something, draw something, and so on? Make sure they understand why they are doing the activity, for example to introduce new language, to practice listening to native speakers, etc.

Listening stage: these activities are about the learners finding the answers or doing the task. There are various types of activities, for example: answering questions, completing something, following directions on a map, matching what is being said with the

set of pictures, doing something in response to what learners hear, for example, draw something, move in a certain way. Examples of listening activities for this stage are: listen and draw, listen and match, listen and order the pictures or a dialogue, listen and follow a route on a map, listen and complete a form, listen and correct, and listen and physically respond (TPR activities, where learners have to listen and react).

Post-listening stage: these activities often move on from listening practice to practicing other skills. So, for example, after hearing about someone's job or family, learners might be asked to talk to each other about their own family or job, or they could be asked to write something. So, the possible three post-listening activities are: speaking activities, writing activities, and pronunciation activities. (p. 49-55)

Davies and Pearse (2000) state that a course book or other listening practice can be made more realistic and interesting by following specific stages and using specific techniques. The stages generally recommended are:

Pre-listening: This stage is to prepare the learners for what they are going to hear, just as we are usually prepared in real life. You should not tell the learners to listen and then to start the cassette. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: discussing a relevant picture or experiences, associating ideas or vocabulary with the topic, predicting information about the topic, and writing questions about the topic.

Whilst-listening: this stage is to help the learners understand the text. You should not expect them to try to understand every word. For example, you may ask them to listen

for three pieces of information the first time they hear the recording, and to tell you about the attitude of the speakers after the second time they have heard it. In general, you should help your learners understand rather than testing their understanding the whole time. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: identifying the exact topic, or an aspect of it, noting two to four pieces of information, answering questions, completing sentences, tables, maps or pictures.

Post-listening: This stage is to help the learners connect what they have heard with their own ideas and experiences, just as we often do in real life. It also allows you to move easily from listening to another language skill. For example the learners may practice speaking by role-playing interviews similar to one they have heard. Some teaching ideas for this stage are: giving opinions, relating

similar experiences, and role-playing, writing a brief report or a similar text, and discussing the topic. (p.77-78).

CONCLUSION

As the conclusion, it is a bright idea that popular English songs are utilized for teaching English skills. The English songs are considered to be appropriate because they are authentic and contain real cultures. In the classroom, the teaching steps include pre-listening, whilst-listening, and post-listening activities. Each activity is interrelated one another. In addition, English teachers have to be more creative in employing the English songs in the classroom.

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