

THE USE OF SONGS IN TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ПЕСЕН В ОБУЧЕНИИ НАВЫКОВ АУДИРОВАНИЯ

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Murphey suggests that many English teachers have long recognized that song and music work well in language classes. The statement shows that teachers can use song as a media to overcome the students' difficulties in listening and improve their listening ability. Creative teacher can also use songs to teach English through songs since they provide a break from the textbook and work book. It is new and interesting for them. Therefore, with this situation, they will be motivated especially in learning listening [1, 13].

The teacher's creativity in developing the material, in this case song, is needed. The teacher may follow the principles criteria when they choose song as media of teaching listening. As it stated by Coromina and Lynch, songs must have clear and understandable lyrics [2, 62]. The teacher is suggested to choose songs which are understandable; not too fast in term of rhythm so that the students could follow the material based on what they hear from the songs. Furthermore, the different accent of the singer became one of the difficulties faced by the students in listening comprehension using songs [3, 19].

For that reason, it is important for the teacher to select appropriate songs which can help the students learn the language and gain learning objectives. To overcome this problem, the teacher should find the song which is not too fast and understandable; songs must have clear and understandable lyric.

Adam J. Simpson suggested six steps that help teachers involve songs as a method of teaching listening in classroom [4, 1-2].

- Listen to the song.

Start things off by just listening. It's important to remember that this is supposed to be a fun activity; don't make it too serious or boring. Ask learners if they've heard it before, and don't overload them with tasks at this point; simply let them enjoy the music.

- Ask some questions about the title.

Here are a couple of examples of the types of questions you can ask. For John Lennon's wonderful 'Jealous Guy':

'What is a 'jealous guy'?'

'What are three things a jealous guy might do?'

'What kinds of jealousy are there?'

For Queen's classic 'We are the champions':

'What is a champion?'

'What kinds of champions are there in the world?'

'What activities have champions?'

Such questions tend to work really well as conversation starters, so group three or four learners together and then get feedback from each group on their thoughts. If you think it would help, make this your first step, i.e., before the initial listening.

Alternatively, prior to having listened to the song you can teach a couple of words and give a simple task for the first listening.

- Listen to the song again, this time with lyrics.

This time, you should give learners the chance to read the lyrics to the song. At this point you might do one or more of the following activities:

Learners can just read the lyrics while they listen. They can possibly highlight unknown words for later discussion.

You can make a lyric worksheet as a gap fill; learners fill in the gaps as they listen.

You can make cut-out strips of selected missing words and again make a lyric worksheet as a gap fill; this time learners match the word strips to the gaps as they listen.

- Focus on a particular verb tense or aspect of grammar.

Virtually every song centers on a particular verb tense. This is too good an opportunity to pass up in terms of uncovering the grammar.

This acts as a springboard for discussing the function of a specific tense, as well as examining its form. Furthermore, it often tends to raise awareness of grammatical flexibility and ‘poetic license’ in the construction of song lyrics. Students often expect songs to obey the grammatical rules that have been drummed into them. In a surprisingly large number of cases, this can lead to the enlightening discovery that rules can be broken.

- Focus on vocabulary, idioms and expressions.

We’ve noted that many songs bend the rules of grammar. It’s also useful to focus on the creative and artistic use of vocabulary we encounter in lyrics. Start with questions like these (again, for Queen’s classic song ‘We are the champions’):

What does ‘I’ve paid my dues’ mean?

What does ‘my share of’ mean?

What does ‘I’ve taken my bows’ mean?

Go through the meanings, illustrating with other examples if necessary. Songs often serve as really good contexts for phrases and idioms, but it’s good to make sure that the meaning is clear. As with grammar, years of misunderstanding can come to light in this way.

- Round things off with some creativity.

Creativity is an important part of maintaining motivation but it shouldn’t be limited to the teaching approach. Depending on the factors highlighted in the first part of this post (age, language level, cultural specifics, etc.), you might want to try finishing things off with an activity that stimulates creative thought. Here are a few examples of things you can do to get the creative juices flowing:

Write another verse of lyrics, maintaining the same mood and style as the original. This can be done individually or in groups. These new lyrics can be presented to the rest of the class. Perhaps several groups can work on this to come up with a completely new set of lyrics for the whole song.

A song tends to give you the perspective of the singer. Write a response (this can be a paragraph, i.e., not necessarily in lyric form) from the point of view of the person the song is being sung about, or any other protagonist.

Have the learners plan a music video for the song. In groups they decide the location, the characters, and what happens. Then each group explains their idea to the rest of the class and the learners vote on the best one. The results can be surprising, as they frequently come up with an interpretation that hadn’t even occurred to you!

Write a diary entry for a character in the song. Get learners to examine the thoughts and feelings that inspired the story being played out in the lyrics.

REFERENCES

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