

El Uso de la Música para Enseñar Idiomas

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Resumen

Canciones, así como cantos, presentan una gran cantidad de beneficios si bien utilizado y trabajado en nuestras lecciones de idioma extranjero. De hecho, las canciones proporcionan una valiosa fuente de recursos y hay varias maneras de explotarlos en el aula. Son una manera animada y motivadora de introducir a los niños a un nuevo idioma que proporciona oportunidades para aprender vocabulario, gramática, práctica y mejorar las habilidades orales, la pronunciación y los patrones prosódicos de estrés, ritmo y entonación. Además, las canciones y la música también enseñan cultura de los países de habla extranjera, ya que reflejan aspectos socioculturales.

Palabras clave: Canciones, Música, Primaria, Inglés, Metodología, Aprendizaje.

Title: The Use of Music to Teach Languages.

Abstract

Songs, as well as chants, present a lot of benefits if well used and worked in our foreign language lessons. In fact, songs provide a valuable source of authentic FL uses and there are several ways to exploit them in the classroom. They are a lively and motivating way of introducing children to new language which provides opportunities to learn vocabulary, grammar, practice and improve the oral skills, pronunciation and the prosodic patterns of stress, rhythm and intonation. Furthermore, songs and music also teach culture from the foreign language speaking countries since they reflect sociocultural aspects.

Keywords: Songs, Music, Primary, English, Methodology, Learning.

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Songs have always existed as a means of communication, being an integral part of our language experience. Music has been used as a universal vehicle of expression since ancestral times, for example, nowadays, it is used to describe feelings, to express political ideals, to tell stories, etc. With all the technological devices we have, it is very easy to have access to music and its lyrics, and for these reasons, music and songs constitute a useful resource in the language classroom.

First, when choosing a song for our lessons, we have to think about several criteria such as:

- The aim of the lesson and the objective the song is going to fulfill
- What he is going to teach through it: vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, socio-cultural aspects, etc.
- If it is going to be used for a warm-up, follow-up activity or in the core of the lesson.
- The age, level of the students and their interests.

As we can see, it is the teacher's responsibility to choose the most suitable song for each group of students. However, it is also advisable to allow students to contribute to the choice of songs, making the lessons learner centered as it is stated in Royal Decree 198/2014 of Region of Murcia. This choice has some advantages as:

- Choosing some didactic materials gives our students some sense of responsibility in their own learning process.
- It breaks the barrier between students and teacher, creating a warmer atmosphere.

Regarding the didactic use of songs, we will explain now the various sectors of language music and songs can teach, beginning with vocabulary.

Songs can be used to introduce, to practice, to extend or to review vocabulary. For instance, students could act out the songs as they are singing them, thus associating a concept with the corresponding action. They can also point at the objects or pictures of the items of vocabulary mentioned in the song, hold and raise flashcards or pictures or mime the concepts. We can use a song for gap-filling, choosing the right option, correction. Lexical structures are also taught through songs like every day phrases or idioms.

If we want to go beyond simple vocabulary, we could also use songs as a way of teaching grammar. By listening to songs, students gradually gain insights into how language works. The repetitions and rhythm will help students to remember grammar structures or basics about word order like adjectives before nouns.

Next, we are going to look at the learning of phonetics through songs.

Using songs in class, especially with young learners, clearly improves their phonological competence. As a matter of fact, songs develop awareness on:

- Individual sounds and sounds in connected speech: We need to point out that young students have a natural ability to imitate and reproduce new and totally unknown sounds for them without effort. Taking advantage of this, English phonemes can be worked through songs from a very early stage.
- Stress and rhythm: songs help students to become aware of the stress that exists in English. To repeat the natural rhythm found in songs is a good way to establish the stress pattern of spoken English.

Finally, we can use songs to teach sociocultural aspects in our lessons. Knowing about a language is not simply a matter of knowing about how it is spoken. We have to know also how their native speakers live, think and behave, their customs and social conventions, etc. Students must acquire the sociocultural competence in order to be communicatively competent.

Once we understand the way songs are useful to teach several aspects of the foreign language, we are going to see how to use of songs from a general teaching point of view.

The first requirement a teacher must fulfill is to familiarize himself with the song. We have to select the vocabulary and key phrases. This has to be done in advance to try to limit the difficulties the students may have with the song. Once this is accomplished, there are 4 main stages to follow:

1. Introduce the song in a way the students feel involved with what they are going to listen. We have to know what they already know about a topic by asking questions, brainstorming or creating interest. It is crucial to introduce target vocabulary or grammatical items contained in the text at this stage by using drawings or descriptions.
2. Listen to the song. Here we need to provide visual aids, repetition, gestures, reinforcing structures and vocabulary.
3. Sing the song
4. The final stage is the reinforcement and strengthening stage. Here we can develop complementary tasks.

CONCLUSION

Songs provide a valuable source of authentic language and there are hundreds of ways to exploit them in the classroom. In this unit we have examined their value, typologies and techniques for their use in class since songs can be used to encourage and to motivate the students to learn English and to improve their linguistic skills and cultural knowledge.

We must always bear in mind our pupil's interest when selecting songs. By using them we can make a complete work as they make the students to remember vocabulary and grammar more easily, and they are useful to learn pronunciation and culture, while they practice the four skills at the same time: speaking, listening, writing and reading. We can conclude by saying that songs become a valuable aid to the teaching of English and a linguistic, affective, cognitive, cultural and social resource.

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