

Why use songs and rhymes in class?

Título: Why use songs and rhymes in class?. **Target:** Maestros lengua extranjera inglés. **Asignatura:** Foreign Language Teaching. **Autor:** María Concepción García Espada, Maestra de lengua extranjera inglés e infantil.

There are many reasons for using songs and rhymes in teaching English as a foreign language in primary schools. Naturally, children really enjoy learning and singing songs and have fun doing rhythmic activities while reciting rhymes.

They have an important function in teaching English. They combine important didactic claims like *the holistic*, *the monolingual* and *the contextual approach* with fun, activity and motivation.

Also the children become familiar with parts of the foreign culture.

Teachers should collect useful songs and rhymes which are linking to the children context. They should use songs and rhymes more often than they do.

TYPES OF SONGS

- Pop Songs: These are songs that repeat their chorus a lot of times. With this kind of songs, the children can be more motivating singing their favourite singer's songs.
- Songs for occasions: These songs are useful to present the special vocabulary and to celebrate these occasions in the school. They emphasize the cultural aspect of songs.
- Moving songs: They associate words with movements of the body. They make children to internalize the sounds and rhythms of English.
- Counting songs: They teach the numbers and are often connected with using fingers. Most of them train the numbers from one to ten.
- Rounds: A round is a circular song. One group begins singing, then the second group begins the song when the first group gets to the end of the first line. The third group begins when the second group gets the end of the first line and so on. When the singers get to the end of the last line, they continue singing from the beginning again, so the song becomes circular.
- Traditional songs and rhymes: They are popular songs which everyone knows because they learn at home.

NURSERY RHYMES

Nursery rhymes are tales in rhymed verses for little children.

JAZZ CHANTS

They help non-native speakers get the "feel" of American English. The student learns the stress, rhythm and intonation patterns. It's a very effective and enjoyable way to learn.

Steps in teaching a jazz chant:

1. Be sure students know all the key vocabulary.
2. Write the chant on the blackboard.
3. Read the entire chant to the class.
4. Read one line at a time and have students repeat the line until they can say most of the words.
5. Add the rhythm. Let the class do the rhythm and say it at the same time.
6. Let “sofoists” say it while everyone else claps.

TONGUE TWISTERS

It is a phrase or sentence which is hard to speak fast, usually because of alliteration or a sequence of nearly similar sounds.

To get the full effect of a tongue twister you should try to repeat it several times, as quickly as possible, without stumbling or mispronouncing.

HOW CAN WE USE SONGS IN ENGLISH CLASS?

- To practise grammar: In songs there are some grammar structure and the students acquire them unconsciously.
- To practise vocabulary: At the beginner and elementary levels, the learner rarely has the opportunity to make contact with more than a few words of the foreign language.
- To practise pronunciation:
 - Sounds: Listening to songs and appreciating rhymes, helps develop an ear for the sounds of a language and the ability to imitate this.
 - Stress: With songs and rhymes they learn which part of the word should receive the heaviest emphasis.
 - Rhythm: Children learn the English rhythm (with stressed syllable and non stressed syllables).
 - Intonation: They improve their English intonation by singing songs and rhymes because it is very difficult, it doesn't follow any rules.
- To practise listening: When they listen the song or rhyme, they are doing a listening. Do listenings with songs and rhymes is more motivating for the pupils.
- To practise speaking (conversational exchanges): Learning a song or a rhyme trains the pupil to listen and practises clear rhythmic speech.
- To practise reading: Because the teacher gives to the students songs written and they read them.
- To practise writing: The teacher can order to the students make some songs and then they are practising writing.
- To enjoy ourselves: Children naturally enjoy singing songs and rhymes.

Activities with songs and nursery rhymes

- Blanks: the teacher give lyrics with some blanks, they first listen to song once, at the second time they fill in the blanks and finally they listen to it another time to check if they got the blanks filled in correctly,

this activity takes around 20 minutes. Blanks can be very helpful when teaching subjects like simple past, this will help them memorize the past form of regular and irregular verbs.

- A sailor went to sea: Check everyone understands the meanings of the homonyms.

Presenting songs and rhymes

Songs and rhymes are useful to practise grammatical's structure, pronunciation, as well as accent, rhythm, intonation of words and phrases.

To practise vowels sounds, some of them present a difficulty to Spanish learners.

Also to develop auditive comprehension which led to reading and writing practise.

It depends of the level of the class, we can present the songs in different ways, for example, with small children only singing is a good activity. Upper level can try to memorize the lyric or filling gapes in the lyric.

Routine for teaching songs and rhymes

Steps to teach songs and rhymes:

1. Set the scene. You may need to introduce the song or rhyme by moving it into a simple narrative first or talking about the pictures.
2. Play the tape, or sing the song yourself.
3. Explain the meaning and check the pupil's understanding. Modify some of the vocabulary if it necessary.
4. Repeat line by line. The pupils repeat after you.
5. Replay the tape or sing yourself and encourage the class to join in.

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