



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POPULAR SONGS FOR  
DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS OF FORM ONE  
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS**

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INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

**Dedicated to:**

**MOHAMAD RAFDZI BIN HARUN,  
my beloved husband,  
for the utmost moral and material support  
as well as the exceedingly great understanding  
throughout my hard times in campus.**

**My precious ones:**

**Safarina,**

**Mohamad Firdaus,**

**Syahira,**

**Mohamad Rafsanjani.**

**"You're the greatest gift God has given me!"**



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ESL</b>	<b>English as a Second Language</b>
<b>KBSR</b>	<b>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah</b>
<b>KBSM</b>	<b>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah</b>
<b>PKG</b>	<b>Pusat Kegiatan Guru</b>
<b>UPSR</b>	<b>Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

**Abstract of project submitted to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science**

### **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POPULAR SONGS FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS OF FORM ONE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS**

This study aims at ascertaining the Form One listening skill through the use of popular songs as well as provide variety in classroom teaching and learning. This study also tries to determine students' perception of the use of popular songs in the classroom. The result shows that more than 80% of the respondents in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Sri Muda Shah Alam agree that popular songs can aid in developing listening skills among students.

## **ABSTRAK**

**Abstrak projek yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.**

### **KEBERKESANAN LAGU-LAGU TERKENAL UNTUK MENGEMBANGKAN KEMAHIRAN MENDENGAR DI KALANGAN PELAJAR TINGKATAN SATU**

Kajian ini bertujuan menentukan bahawa lagu-lagu terkenal dan disukai ramai boleh digunakan oleh pelajar di dalam kemahiran mendengar di samping mempelbagaikan teknik pengajaran dan pembelajaran di dalam bilik darjah. Kajian ini juga cuba memastikan pendapat dan pandangan pelajar terhadap penggunaan lagu-lagu tersebut di dalam bilik darjah. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa lebih 80% responden di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Sri Muda menyetujui bahawa lagu-lagu terkenal boleh membantu kemahiran mendengar di kalangan pelajar.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is common knowledge that before the 1970's, English language was regarded as a medium of instruction and the key to social, economic and political achievement for school leavers. The language was widely used inside and outside the classroom. Students were widely exposed to the language as they saw the need to master it due to its importance and as such, their performance was far better than today.

At present, Malaysians need to participate meaningfully in international trade and commerce and keeping abreast with the world's technological development via the English language. Prior to the above need, the National Education Policy has positioned the language as an effective second language and the implementation of the New Curriculum for Primary Schools (KBSR), and the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM) is a strategy to ensure that the above goals are achieved. Students are expected to develop the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as focussing on grammar, the sound system and vocabulary. Apart from that, the importance of moral values is also stressed.

However, due to the national policy of making Bahasa Malaysia the sole medium of instruction, teaching and learning strategies in schools have greatly changed. Due to the fact that students could no longer see or realize

the importance of the English language, their performance in the language deteriorates. They do not see the need to communicate in the language anymore, neither in the classroom as it used to be, nor in their every day lives. Exposure in the language is limited and most students are only able to listen to the use of the language during the particular lesson, which is only a fraction of the whole learning procedure.

We should not deny the fact that students are frequently exposed to English programmes aired on television and movies in cinemas. However, they seem to be focussing more to the subtitles rather than listening to the spoken words. When they listen to songs on the radio, they are attracted more to the music instead of the message in the lyrics. This condition does not allow much improvement in the students' level of English though such activities may be able to help in improving the students' level of English language.

By bringing certain forms of interesting activities into the classroom, the slow and difficult process of learning the English language can be made interesting. Teaching approach which focuses on real communication will be able to lead the comfortable classroom atmosphere. A comfortable classroom atmosphere can be assumed as a gradual step towards building confidence in students using the target language. This will then motivate students to learn the language. According to Chitravelu, Sithamparam and Teh (1995), one of the reasons that students have in the difficulty of learning the English language is the lack of motivation.

According to Chitavelu et al. (1995), motivation is an extremely important factor in successful language acquisition. Highly motivated students will achieve greater success than those with similar level of intelligence but who are not highly motivated. For that matter, motivation, be it extrinsic or intrinsic, is important in enhancing students' interest in English. As teachers we should be able to cater for the need in successful learning and thus, to a certain extent, influence the students' level of motivation.

According to Dubin (1994), songs are believed to be able to provide the material in English that students would want to understand. As such, it contributes to the students' motivation in the learning of English. As students, they need constant change of exciting activities to stimulate their curiosity. The use of songs, as known, is a useful tool in enhancing students' interest and motivation.

### **Background of the Study**

The process of teaching and learning should be made enjoyable, meaningful and most of all, purposeful. This is the most important step in gaining students' interest, no matter what subject the teacher teaches. In the case of teaching English language, a teacher often does not realize the importance of the aspect of listening. Activities based on listening, ranging from listening to the verbal instructions from the teacher to the listening from text-reading of peers, are not challenging and authentic enough. As a result, students naturally do not pay attention to what the listening activities



have to offer. The lack of teacher's creativity results in the lesson being monotonous. This is an intimidating factor that bores the students and inhibits their interest to learn as well as participate in the lesson.

The teacher is the person who makes it possible for his students to learn easily and successfully. This could be done by varying the learning activities to suit the students' needs and interest. According to Harmer (1986), students need involvement in something active that can be appreciated by the teacher. One good activity of students' involvement is using songs. Selected popular songs, for this matter, should give them the challenge as this type of songs are more significant.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Popular songs, or in short, 'pop' songs are any songs which are composed, recorded and produced for entertainment and commercial purposes. They are either sung or rendered instrumentally by local or foreign artists strictly for reasons other than language teaching and learning. However by careful selection by creative and teachers of great interest in the songs, suitable ones can be brought into the classroom to be used successfully in the teaching of English, particularly in developing students' listening skills.

According to Richards (1969), most students enjoy singing, and songs are often a welcome change in the routine of classroom activity in language learning. Enjoyment and pleasure is an important part of language

learning - a fact which is often overlooked by a teacher in his quest for teaching points or by a course designer who tends to focus more on presentation or repetition. The accessibility and authenticity of popular songs help to reinforce the teaching strategy. This song can be a useful aid in the teaching of listening of vocabulary, pronunciation, structures, and sentence patterns. It is up to the creativity of the teacher to produce an interesting, purposeful lesson so that the students will not find learning a language a bore. As they learn the language via the songs, they will unwittingly discover the meaning, grammar points and messages the songs can offer. Apart from exploring the content of the songs, some songs can also be used to prompt discussions or debates.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The success of language learning is influenced by factors such as the teachers themselves, the methodology used, the resources available and the amount of exposure to the target language. It is undeniable that pop songs do contain some lexical items which are unfamiliar to students. The main difficulties are not caused by the music but by the native language used, which is quite different from the ordinary English language. Native language contains words of low frequency, dialect as well as archaic words and sentences which are irregular in structure and stressing. However, despite the above irregularities, the teacher can use these songs to expand the students' linguistic domain. The essential purpose is that the songs can be used in the classroom to ensure that students' interest and motivation in learning the language are maintained.

The purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of using popular songs in the teaching of listening via some suggested listening activities. These songs give the opportunity for students to listen, not just hear, as well as associate, communicate and work with others in a harmonious atmosphere. Popular songs, being more authentic, are chosen as a breakthrough from the traditional educational songs composed strictly to reflect the syllabus and are naturally less significant.

### **Research Questions**

To fulfill the research objectives, some research questions are formulated as follows:

1. Can popular songs help motivate students in learning English?
2. Do students participate actively in lessons using songs?
3. What are some of the problems faced in using popular songs in the classroom?
4. What are some of the suggested ways popular songs can be used in the teaching of listening in the classroom?

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Popular Song**

Popular, or in short, 'pop', is defined by Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary (1991) as "...liked by most people..

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978) defines a song as "... a short piece of music with words for singing or poems suitable or prepared for singing to music..."

To language teachers, a song can be said as a natural, choral language activity with rhythm, rhyme and melody. It is a real life activity which can be brought into the classroom. It can take place anywhere and at anytime.

A song can also mean words and music sung together. It can be a folk song, an English teaching song or a pop song as used in this study. A pop song can also be classified as rock, heavy metal, rhythm and blues and so on. An 'English Teaching Songs' are specially written songs which incorporate a particular structure to be taught in a lesson.

Thus, a popular song can be defined as a piece of music with words that is liked by most people.

## Listening

The Universal Learners' Dictionary defines the word 'listen' as 'to give attention so as to hear'.

According to Pugmire (1977), listening is different from hearing in the sense that when people listen, they take an active part in the process.

## Significance of the Study

A song helps in providing necessary listening and speaking practice. It is a natural, choral language activity which is a contrast of the ordinary choral repetition of a dialogue or drills that often bore the students. It is naturally easy to remember the words of a song and as such, a song can be a useful tool in the teaching of the aspects of listening to vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, structures and sentence patterns.

The use of songs in ESL classrooms also aims at helping teachers to vary their teachings and thus make the English language classrooms more lively and fun for students. This will help students inculcate the interest towards the English language and look forward to the lesson. When listening skills are concerned, the activities using the songs allow them to listen more attentively, and thus they see the importance of listening.

Learning takes place not only through good presentation but also through meaningful, spaced repetition of the learning items. To supplement

the many course books that do not provide sufficient meaningful repetition of the teaching points, a teacher should constantly look for occasions to use the words meaningfully. Carefully selected songs may help in this matter and thus help the teacher to consolidate his teaching.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is carried out to gauge the Form One intermediate level students' perception towards the use of popular songs in their learning of English language. This matter is based on the feedback in the questionnaire distributed to the randomized selected students.

Apart from that, the study is supported by readings of relevant books, articles, journals and dissertations. Analysis of certain aspects in the teaching of English particularly which concerns songs is carried out to assure the utmost success of such procedure. The researcher's own experience in carrying out the sample of activities help in the suggestions made and thus strengthen the points teachers need to consider in carrying out the activities.

However, as this study is carried out in only one school, it does not cater for the proof of its success in any other schools or situations. It may have the weakness in its practicality in certain schools or level of students. As such, any teacher who has decided to adopt or adapt the suggested activities should be aware of the shortcomings and be ready to face any form of possibilities based on the condition of his or her level of students.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Music is often referred to as the universal language whereby man is believed to be able to express tension and gain a release from his tension. With music he can arouse feelings of love and tenderness as well as anger and distress. To a certain group of people, times of celebration or sorrow are made more meaningful with the accompaniment of music.

According to Pugmire (1977), the nature of music demands three roles : the composer, the listener and the performer and it is interesting to note that young children have the tendency to perform all the three roles. A young child's role as a listener often needs to be encouraged because as he becomes more mobile, his skill of listening and attention span is less constant.

We have, at one time or another, heard and read quotations of great writers, such as:

*"Music hath charms to soothe a savage beast, to  
soften rocks and bend a knotted oak..."*

(Congreve, the Morning Bride)



*"If music be the food of love, play on..."*

(Shakespeare, Twelfth Night)

*"That which is not worth saying is sung..."*

(Beaumachias, Barber of Seville)

*"Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thoughts..."*

(Shelly, To a Skylark)

From the above quotations, we can clearly visualize the impact of music and songs on human beings. Like smiles, music and songs can break down all barriers as well as bridges the generation gap of the young and old.

Music has often been used in early childhood programmes. Perhaps the accompanying chant of childhood is not considered as music but from it many songs have emerged, both recorded and non-recorded. If we listen carefully where children are playing, we can hear the influence of songs and music. Being an integral part of the programmes, music is still considered part of what a child experiences and gains in the mastery of his own mother language and the other languages that he learns.

Pugnire (1977) adds that singing is basic to music and almost every person can sing. Deaf and mute children may not be able to sing but they are believed to be able to appreciate the lyrics of songs. To cater for the needs of students, a teacher should have a collection of songs to use with them.



Action, folk and ethnic, self- concept and nonsense songs should be among those kept in her file.

Froebel (1782) cited in Pugmire (1977) wrote a collection of songs to assist mothers and others who care for children. Froebel believed that songs and verses could help children attain complete and healthy development.

Montessori (1870) cited in Pugmire (1977) believed in the 'education of the senses'. Montessori suggested that young children must appreciate silence in order to develop their sense of hearing. To cater for that, she created many 'musically didactic materials' or teaching tools intended to convey instructions for young children.

### **Listening**

According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), listening has often been regarded traditionally as a passive language skill. However it is undeniable that the role of a successful listener is actually an active one. According to Anderson and Lynch, there are a number of ways in which the listener is able to process or fail to process the incoming speech, which serves as a basis of evaluating the degree of success of a particular listening performance. Failure in the listening process could be firstly, due to the listener not able to hear adequately because of the disturbance of the noise around him. Secondly, the listener is able to hear adequately but fail to understand what he hears probably due to the serious problems in syntax or semantics of the foreign language. Third, it may be due to the listener who is