THE FUNCTION OF ENGLISH SONGS TO IMPROVE LISTENING TO
COLLEGE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS

Approved: _____ Date :04/22/13_____

Suggested content descriptor keywords:

Second Language Acquisition

Musical Intelligence

Listening Comprehension

ESL

Automatization

THE FUNCTION OF ENGLISH SONGS TO IMPROVE LISTENING TO
COLLEGE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS

A Seminar paper

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Education

by

Wang Xiao (Jack)

2013

Abstract

THE FUNCTION OF ENGLISH SONGS TO IMPROVE LISTENING TO
COLLEGE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS

WangXiao

Under the supervision of Kara Candito, Ph.D.

There is no denying that listening plays a vital role to college ESL students, Chinese college ESL students consider listening important and difficult. While the situation in China is that the role of listening has been overlooked for a quite long time, many teachers simply explain the difficult and key words to students, play the recording and check the exercise answer. That passive listening teaching model seriously dampens students' interests and reduces the effectiveness of teaching. With beautiful melody and highly memorable lyrics, introducing English songs to ESL listening classroom not only can creates a relaxed atmosphere, but also provides enough input to college ESL students. This paper will analyze the characteristics of listening comprehension; the problems existing in present ESL listening teaching in China, the musical intelligence, the features and functions of English songs, and the strategies for using English pop songs in the ESL listening classrooms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Among the basic four skills in our lives, listening is the most frequently used. Listening accounts for 45%, speaking 30%, reading 16%, while writing 9 %.(Hedge, 2007). The average adult spent far more time in listening than reading, writing and speaking. (Janusik, 2002). For quite a long time, listening was regarded as a passive process, listeners just received information passively.

Influenced by the traditional concept of listening which I mentioned earlier, in China's college ESL listening teaching, many teachers simply explain the key or difficult words in listening materials to the students, play the recording and check the exercise answers. If students get wrong answers, teachers may play the recording again until the students got the right answer. Under this circumstance, students feel bored and thus unmotivated to learn. Teaching listening is not an easy task and it requires interaction between teachers and students.

Accordingly, it is important to introduce an effective tool into listening teaching among intermediate level students. "Music is rhythm, a reflection of our physiological life. Music is also melody, sequence of sounds, which is associated with our emotional life." (Fonseca-Mora, Toscano-Fuentes, & Wermke, 2011, p. 102). Music cultivates esteem and motivation to young people. (Whyte & Mould, 2011). Not only children, but also adults prefer to listen to music. As a younger generation, Chinese ESL college students regard listening to English songs as a fashion. With beautiful melodies and highly memorable lyrics, introducing English songs to college ESL

listening teaching can create a relaxed atmosphere, improve learners' motivation and provide enough language input.

In order to get the main idea of the theoretical framework of the present study, the characteristics of the listening comprehension, factors affecting listening comprehension and the problems in teaching ESL listening will be provided. Based on Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, the rationales of using English songs to ESL listening will be analyzed. After that, several parts with the English songs will be presented, which includes the features of English songs, the functions of English songs to the ESL listening classrooms, the reasons for using English songs to ESL listening classrooms and the principles for selecting the songs. The final part of the literature review will be focused on strategies for using English songs in the college ESL listening classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

The problems expressed as questions are：

1. To what extent does present Chinese ESL listening teaching cultivate college ESL students' interests?

2. To what extent do English songs have great effect in ESL listening teaching?

3. What strategies for using English songs can apply to ESL listening teaching?

Definition of Terms

Musical Intelligence: Musical intelligence is one of Howard Gardner's nine Multiple Intelligences. It involves how skillful an individual is performing, composing, and

appreciating music and musical patterns (Helding, 2010).

Second Language Acquisition: Second-language acquisition or second-language learning is the process for people through the same stages to acquire the language other than native language (Singhal, 2011).

Automatization: It is an element of language fluency. In other words, it is using a kind of language to express ideas fluently (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988).

Listening Comprehension: The process of decoding speech and it is the basic step of input, as well as the activity for brains to mentally process the information that one has absorbed.

ESL: Abbreviation for the term English as a second Language.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the characteristics of listening comprehension; the problems exist in present ESL listening teaching in China, the musical intelligence, the features and functions of English songs, the strategies for using English songs to ESL listening classroom. To give readers a clear picture that using English songs properly in College English listening classroom can bring active influence on ESL students and achieve the certain outcomes that teachers want to made.

Significance of the Study

Listening plays a vital role to college ESL students, while the situation in China is that the role of listening has been overlooked for a quite long time. Teaching listening is both difficult and important, Using English songs can be a good way to teaching college ESL listening since English songs have its own characteristics. While very few studies analyze this topic from comprehensive perspective. Accordingly, it is important to present a clear picture on relationship between English songs and college ESL listening classroom and examples will given to show how English songs can achieve the outcomes.

Delimitation of the Study

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville online and the books borrowed from the library in Wuhan South Central University for Nationalities. Primary searches will be conducted Using multiple academic peer reviewed journals through EBSCO host with ERIC, Academic Search premier and Wilson as the primary sources. Key search topics will include "Second Language Acquisition", "Musical Intelligence", "Listening Comprehension" "ESL" and "Automatization."

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Traditionally, people overlook the role of listening, while overemphasizing the role of reading and writing in learning (Qiu, 2006; Cook, 2001; Rost, 2005). Listening is one of the indispensable abilities in language. As a kind of input, listening is the foundation of speaking and writing. If a student does not receive effective listening input, he or she may not perform well in writing and speaking since the two output abilities are more difficult. Listening is important because listening helps students lay the foundations of speaking and writing. Through listening, students can acquire decent pronunciation and learn many useful words, phrases, and sentences.

Although there is an increasing recognition of importance of listening, there are still many problems for teaching listening to second language learners in the classrooms. For example, many task-based activities are dull and lack of personal interests, so that students may lose interest on listening（Yang, 2008）. For example, many Chinese teachers seem to rely too much on textbooks and overlook the interaction with students. The class is full of teacher-lecturing and group discussions are rare. Accordingly, it is necessary to introduce songs in listening teaching to ESL college students since English songs not only create the relaxed atmosphere but also provides enough input.

In order to get the main idea of the theoretical framework of the present study, the characteristics of the listening comprehension, factors affecting listening comprehension and the problems in teaching ESL listening will be provided. Based

on Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, the rationales of using English songs to ESL listening will be analyzed. After that, several parts with the English songs will be presented. These aspects will include the features of English songs, the functions of English songs to the ESL listening classrooms, the reasons for using English songs to ESL listening classrooms and the principles for selecting the songs. The final part of the literature review will be focused on strategies for using English songs in the college ESL listening classrooms.

Listening Comprehension

Characteristics of the Listening Comprehension

In the book "Teaching and Researching Listening," Rost (2005) proposes that listening is a cognitive, active intentional process. Ur (2000) points out the characteristics of listening: colloquial language, invisibility of the speaker, and the interactive. It is not hard to understand that. The materials shall be easy for students to get the main idea; usually it involves the colloquial language, so that students may predict the process. Since it is not the real listening, the speakers are invisible (except in the conversation between teachers and students). Listening comprehension also is interactive, that is to say students shall give feedback to teachers what they heard and teachers shall give their evaluations at the proper time. The listening process needs to be actively involved, both teachers and students, rather than receive the information passively.

Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension

Affective factors.

Affective factors including various factors, such as motivation, attitude, interest, confidence, and anxiety. Dulary and Burt (1975) created the concept of "affective filter hypothesis" to illustrate the influence of the affective factors to foreign language learning. They defined it as "an inner processing development, hinder the absorbing of the language to learners by affective factors subconsciously." Based on their theory, Krashen (1982) further divided affective factors into three aspects: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Those factors affect second language learning. Through the experimental studies on 189 Taiwanese ESL students in 2008, Chang and Ching received the feedbacks that 128 (80%) students feel more nervous in listening class than other courses. They consider listening very difficult and are afraid of eye-contact with the teachers. Chang and Ching (2008) also point out that listening anxiety related closely to the learners' language competence, the characteristics of language input and nature of spoken English. Attitude influences the class participation and positive attitude makes it easier for students to learn a second language (Xiao, 2009). If people are unmotivated, afraid of failure or hold negative views on culture language, their affective filter is high, which will hinder the acquisition. On the contrary, those who are more confident and feel relaxed in language learning have a low affective filter, which will boost the effectiveness of learning.

Psychological factors.

Well known psychologist Maslow (1968, 1970), suggests a hierarchy of needs, in which he divided it into two main categories: deficiency needs and the being needs. The former included the basic needs for survival, security, belonging and self-esteem. If this need cannot be fulfilled, it is impossible for people to do other things. The latter needs contain the fulfillment of individual potential, with the representation of cognitive and aesthetic development. For college ESL teachers, it is necessary to provide a non-threatening atmosphere for students (Wang, 2008; Rost, 2005). For example, if the subject is too difficult for students, which can bring them worries or makes them afraid. In this case, the teachers shall consider carefully the materials or texts used in classes. What's more, maybe to some opinions there is only one student who did agree or not to the idea. In many cases he or she did not have the courage to voice out his or her opinions since the majority holds the opposite view. In this case, the teachers shall encourage students to voice out his or her opinions so as to provide a non-threatening atmosphere. For students who engage different skills or talents, teachers shall design a variety of tasks and activities. Students shall encourage thinking and teachers shall be open to student's questions.

Another theory that needs to be mentioned is "Locus of control," which was defined by Findley and Cooper (1983). Locus of control represents one's attitudes towards control over their life events. Internalisers are those who feel responsible for everything that happens to them in their lives. Externalisers are those who believe that events are determined by the force beyond control. To college ESL students, the

theory of "Locus of control" determines whether they accept or refuse the learning task, whether concentrated or not during the learning process, whether or not they can conquer difficulties. In ESL studying, externalisers rely largely on their teachers and consider teachers as the key factor to their academic success. Influenced by traditional models of teacher authority, the teachers dominate the classes. Chinese teachers spend much of their classroom time on lectures (Jin, 2005). Many ESL teachers still dominate the classrooms and ESL students have few chances to have a discussion or express their opinions in classes. It is advisable that teachers understand students' strengths and give proper evaluation of their behavior, encourage students more and help them to face the setbacks positively.

As a concept from psychology, memory is also important for listening comprehension. There are three stages of the memory system: sensory memory, short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM) (Rost, 2005). It is difficult to store the information since the first two stages are relatively short. To ESL students, listening comprehension is not an easy task since memory span for foreign language is shorter than that for one's native language. For example, listening takes 35% of the score in the CET-4 and CET-6 Test. Many students hold the wrong assumption that they have to understand every single word they have heard. Once they encounter a word they do not recognize, chances are they have miss the following information while still racking their brains. Under this circumstance, bottom-up processing should be replaced by top-down processing since the former focused on listening for words, while the latter focused on listening for the main ideas of the information (Richards,

2005).

Cognitive factors.

In second language learning, second language learners may have the impression that it will be easier to learn if there exists many similar factors between their native language and the target language, it is true. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) propose that "Meaningful learning requires a deliberate effort on the part of learners to relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already process" (p. 40). The transfer of learning is vital in language acquisition. Cathlin and Viviene (1999) divided the transfer of learning into two kinds: positive transfer and negative transfer. If the appropriate connections are made, positive transfer will occur. Negative transfer, caused by the result of incomplete or incorrect schema, leads to an inappropriate application of prior concepts to new situations. Liu (2008) maintained that we should pay more attention to the negative transfer. It is important to emphasize the differences between native language and foreign language in order to find and analyze what the real problem is. Accordingly, it will be more effective for teaching.

Input factors.

Input plays a vital role in second-language acquisition (Rost, 2005). Input means to gather and take in appropriate information. Krashen (1985) created the theory input hypothesis, in which he used "i" to stand for learners' current level, and "i+1" to represent the level which is little beyond the current level. "i+1" is referred to as a comprehensible input. Krashen maintained that there are two independent systems in second language performance. They are 'the learned system' and 'the

acquired system'. He regards acquisition as a product of a subconscious process similar to how children acquire their first language. While 'learning' is a conscious process focused on grammatical rules, acquisition is more important than learning. 'i+1' is only achieved when comprehension input is promoted. According to the 'i+1" principles, it is considered to be improper if the input materials are too easy to be understood, for it will not motivate learner's interests.

There are many criticisms to Krashen's comprehensible input (Swain, 1995; Schmidt, 1990; Cook, 2001; Payne, 2011; Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Mitchell and Myles; Cook (1998, 2001) state that the presence of the learners' present state of knowledge is unclear; "i+1" is intended to refer to lexis, phonology, syntax, discourse, which is also not clear. It is lacking of testability and evidence, too vague and absolute for teachers to control. In many cases though a great amount of input has taken place, the second language learners did not make progress to beyond the current level. Schmidt (1990) didn't see eye to eye with Krashen concerning to the concepts between acquisitions and learning. He reckons that we are consciously notice the language from the very beginning, which is contradicted with Krashen's view. Through the experimental study of twenty-five, 11 to 12−year−old pupils under Krashen's input hypothesis theory, Payne (2011) found that it is difficult to measure "i" or indeed "i+1". He criticizes that Krashen's introduction of "i+1" seems problematic and it is difficult to judge whether or not learners acquired were 'i+1' above their current level of language. Swain (1995) put forward the output hypothesis to criticize Krashen's neglect of the role of language output. Swain claims that output

(including speaking and writing) helps students notice the gap between their problems in their linguistic knowledge and the target language; this discovery can spur the learning process and assist the progress.

Though there are many criticisms against Krashen's input hypothesis, we should not neglect the values of it. Krashen put forward the four basic conditions for best comprehensible input: The input must understandable, input must be interesting and closely related, input shall not merely focus on teaching grammar, and input shall comprehensible. We can get some ideas from it. First, teachers shall give materials that are suitable to students' current level. Second, the teachers shall pay more attention to the significance of the input rather than the format. Last, more efforts should be made to make the teaching interesting.

The Problems in ESL Listening Teaching

As I have mentioned in previous part, listening is important and difficult for college ESL students. Campbell (2011) made a survey of the role of listening skills in the classrooms. Four-fifths of the teachers recognized the importance of listening skills in classrooms, while almost the equal figures use less than 10% of the instructional time on listening skills. Brand's (2007) comment is very vivid and to the point: crowded classes, monotonous testing, and over-emphasis on teaching grammatical rules is the present emphasis reality of the ESL classrooms in China.

Many Chinese teachers or experts also put forward the problems in ESL listening teaching (Yang, 2008; Qiao, 2005; Zhang, 2007). Yang (2008) summarized the problems into three aspects. First, students are lacking of effective instruction and

practice in learning the listening courses. Second, the lack of input makes students into passive learners. Third, text-based listening methodology will lose students' interests. Qiao (2005) attributes the problems into teaching methods and the differences of current students' levels. He deems that listening teaching was regarded as the activity of passive reception of information for quite a long time. The concept of task-based teaching should be changed. There lays the problem of overgeneralization of students' levels; some received listening practice in middle school, while others did not. Hence, the current listening teaching should change its old and simple method as well as consider choosing the listening materials. Zhang's (2007) idea is similar to Yang and Qiao. He points out that teachers usually turn a listening course into a listening-testing course, which will dampen students' interests.

It is not hard to see that the main problem lies in the teaching methods. A more effective and educative way should be introduced to listening teaching; not only to attract students' interests, but also to create an interactive atmosphere. Many Chinese students consider ESL listening difficult and they have high degree of anxiety in listening courses. Thus, the rationales of musical intelligence and ESL listening teaching will be analyzed in the following part.

Musical Intelligence

In his book "Frames of Mind", Gardner (1983) puts forward multiple intelligence theory(MIT), in which he divides human intelligence into musical, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial and natural. According to Gardner, all human beings

process all of these intelligences to a certain degree. He believes that instructors shall meet and develop students' various intelligences. In order to provide enough experiences for students, instructors shall prepare for various teaching methods.

Gardner (1983) claims that "Musical intelligence is the ability to appreciate, distinguish, compose, and perform in various musical forms (pp. 99-127). Developmental psychologists accord that music is one of the earliest talents in a child's development (Helding, 2010). According to the findings by neurologists, musical and language processing occur in the same area of the brain (Maess & Koelsch, 2001). MIT helps teachers use various techniques and improve the efficiency of communication in the classrooms. MIT makes great contributions to classes control and effectiveness of the lessons (Acat, 2005).

Through the experimental study, Akbari and Hosseini (2007) found that multiple intelligence and second language proficiency are related. Mcclellan and Conti (2008) using Gardner's multiple intelligence theory to analyze 874 students from the general education classes at Tulsa community college in Tulsa, Oklahoma, found that, within various kinds of multiple intelligence the most preferred multiple intelligence are Bodily-Kinesthetic (19%) and musical (18%).

Since Chinese ESL students feel bored with the traditional teaching method, why not introduce English songs to ESL listening teaching? Since no words or symbols need to be perceived, it is easy for students to memorize the lyrics. Chinese ESL students are fascinated with English songs and eager to learn the culture of foreign language. Actually different activities can be applied to students who have

different intelligence. For those who have high musical intelligence, teachers can invite them to sing the song in front of the class. Whereas for those who have high bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, teachers can assign the role-play task according to the themes of the song, since they love to be engaged in activities related to the body.

English Songs in College ESL Listening Teaching

The Features of English Songs

Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011) defines that "Music is rhythm, a reflection of our physiological life. Music is also melody, sequence of sounds, which is associated with our emotional life." (p. 102). As a universal icon, songs have a great reputation. Lieb (2008) points out that songs can reduce one's pressure and create a relaxed atmosphere. Not only kids, but also adults love songs. Wang (2008) summarized the three main features of pop songs: songs that are highly motivating, songs that contain linguistic information, and songs that contain historical and cultural knowledge. Besides linguistic features, Lynch (2008) puts forth that pop songs are so popular that have strong influences to use in teaching. What's more, it creates fun for both teachers and students. Liao (2006) and Jiang (2004) claim that English songs have beautiful melodies and the lyrics are easy to imitate and memorize. Lieb (2008) deems that pop songs are easy to receive by students since they live in an environment surrounded by pop music. Students link their lives to the song since many songs' lyrics reflect students' emotions. For example, John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Road." influences generation after generation, even many Chinese are very familiar with this song. This song expresses a common theme of people missing their home and family

members if they did not go back to their home for a long time.

The Functions of Songs to ESL Classrooms

Many writers infer that English songs have the great effect on listening comprehension (Lems, 2001; Vernon, 2006; Fonseca-Mora et al., 2011; Qiu, 2006; Rapport, 2005; Farrug, 2008). Lems (2001) Rapport (2005) Farrug (2008) put that English songs can improve comprehension skills, increase vocabulary and create fun. Vernon (2006) claims that English songs bring energy to the classroom and boost students' confidence. Foneseca-Mora el al and Qiu (2011, 2006) point out another two functions of English songs in teaching listening: to improve the memory and practice the pronunciation.

English songs provide authentic materials and contain various universal themes. (Eg: love, friendship, dream, and joy). English songs also promote an active atmosphere. Music has the greatest potential in ESL classrooms since music has related closely to language (Lieb, 2008). Much linguistic information is contained in English songs, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

When we refer to holidays, of course Spring Festival is the most important to the Chinese. Christmas is the most important festival to Americans and other westerners. Although the holidays are different, their meanings of family and celebration are universal. During Christmas, a song with high recognition is "Jingle Bells." This is a song written by James Lord Pierpont and originally was for Thanksgiving (Watson, 2011). The song associates with Christmas just because people sang this song on Christmas and it became widely popular. You may think

this song is too easy for teaching in the ESL listening classroom, actually it is not. The song can be divided into four verses. The first two verses, especially the first verse is most familiar to people. This song gives people happiness. Teachers can use this song as background music and then introduce the Christmas customs of western countries. What's more, teachers can also use this song to teach students' pronunciation and vocabulary. For example, "O'er the fields we go" O'er is the elision of over; "Dashing through the snow" dash means move quickly. Teachers can prepare more examples to practice students' pronunciation and vocabulary. Of course, just listening to a song is not the teachers' aim; it would be preferred for teachers to create practical and relational activities. For this song is to bring students joy, to help them practice their pronunciation, to learn the vocabulary and some cultural knowledge.

For historical knowledge, one song of British culture that has to be mentioned is "Auld Lang Syne." "Auld Lang Syne" was recomposed from the poem of the famous Scottish poet Robort Burns. Originally, this song was used on New Year's Eve to celebrate the beginning of the New Year. Nowadays, the song is also used at funerals, graduations, and as a farewell or other occasions. This song became more famous to the audience after it was used as the theme of the film "Waterloo Bridge." This movie presents the love story between Roy (acted by Robert Taylor) and Myra (acted by Vivien Leigh) during WWI. The themes about this song are love and friendship. With beautiful melody, clear pronunciation and suitable tempo, this song is easy for students to follow and memorize. Teachers can teach students some vocabulary within

the lyrics. For example, "Auld Lang Syne" means the good old day, "gie's hand o'thine" gie's is Scottish dialect, which means give us. Through the message conveyed in this song, teachers can let students share their ideas on love and friendship or have a group discussion on different values on love between China and western countries. Teachers can also let students watch the videos of this song (with the scenes from the movie), which can help students better understand it. This song is a good choice for teachers to use in ESL classroom and students can learn history and cultural knowledge from it.

The Reasons for Using English Songs in ESL Listening Classrooms

On the reasons for using English songs in listening teaching, Lems (2001) Points out those English songs can shift teachers' choice and provide an informal atmosphere for students to learn. Jiang (2004) included songs in listening teaching for two main reasons: Affective reason and linguistic reason. For affective reason, he mentions the affective filter hypothesis put forward by Krashen. In Jiang's eyes, using English songs in class is an effective method, for songs to be a weak affective filter and so that it can increase the input and create a relaxed and pleasing atmosphere. For linguistic reasons, songs have strong and typical rhythms, which are easy for students to memorize and they enhance the effect of teaching.

On the basis of Jiang, Liao (2006) adding another reason, that is cognitive reason. For cognitive reason, he summarized two main aspects. First is to receive proper language input, in which he mentioned Krashen's input hypothesis. Second, he is assuming that using English songs can provide opportunities for automatization.

Traditional concepts hold the view that automatization will happen with practice even in the non-communicative environment. While Gatbonton & Segalowitz (1988) claim that only when teachers set students in the environment to listen, sing and appreciate English songs can the automatization be achieved. What's more, they also point out that if music itself has features like the repetition of lyrics and the response to contexts, the automatization will greatly improve during the students' language learning process. For example, Rod Stewart's song 'Sailing' has the characters with the repetition of the continuous tense. According to this character, students can recompose the lyrics like: I am sailing, I am sailing, in my classroom with my friends (Liao, 2006).

Consequently, automatization relates closely to music in the ESL listening classrooms. On one hand, automatization will not be very effective if the songs are not used. On the other hand, songs with suitable features improve automatization during the process of ESL learning.

The Principles for Selecting Songs

After presenting experts' view on the function of English songs in teaching listening and the reasons for using it, it is time to introduce the principles for selecting songs. Of course, not all songs are suitable for students to learn, and some may be difficult; some may have inappropriate themes for teachers to teach. The key point is that the teachers like it and want to share it with students (Lems, 2005). If the teachers really love the song, chances are most of the students will have the preference for the songs their teachers' choice. It is easy for the teachers to carry on

the lessons deeply and emotionally. Lems (2001) deems that songs should be handily chosen. First the lyrics should be clear, not vague; second, vocabulary shall be suitable for the current students' ability; third, songs should be played before recommending them to students in order to avoid negative contents (eg: pornography, controversial religious issues). Lieb (2008) notes that the length of the songs should be controlled within four minutes, because songs that too fast may disperse students' interests. Hua and Lynch (2007, 2008) note that songs should have appropriate positive themes (love, peace, friendship, joy, dream, etc) and are preferred by students. Vernon and Wang (2006, 2008) point out that the melodies shall not be too fast and contexts shall be easy to understood. Ur (2000) also reckons that the easy materials are better than difficult. For easy materials, even miss some parts of it during listening, students can still get it. While for the difficult, it will cause some negative effects, such as frustration and lack of motivation.

To sum up, it is advisable for teachers to choose the songs carefully. First, the teachers shall be aware of their difficulty . Not all pop songs are suitable for use, for example rap has fast tempo and unclear pronunciation, which is not suitable for teachers to use. Second, theme is very important. There are already many inappropriate themes in pop songs already. If teachers use those songs, students may get bad influences from it. For example, it is unsuitable for teachers to choose songs with violence and pornography, which may give students a bad illusion and definitely did not have any useful relation to the teachers' objectives. Teachers shall use the songs with appropriate positive themes. Before introducing it to students, teachers

shall listen to the songs in advance. In China, although there exist some different preferences between different songs, teachers have their guidelines: with positive themes and relating to teaching objectives closely. If they are not sure whether the song is good or not, they can change another song or share the song to their colleagues and friends to let them share their opinions. Third, the length of songs should be controlled. If the songs are too long, students may lose their interest and it will take more time for teachers to assign the activities, which is unrealistic. Listening to English songs is just one important part of ESL listening teaching, not the whole. The more important aspect is to teach students the skills and linguistic features to learn. Last but not the least, although teachers always have the final say, they shall give students some chances to choose the song, if the songs are really good and suitable for teaching, why not use them? Maybe teachers will love the songs as well even though they never listened to them before.

The Strategies for Using English Pop Songs in the ESL Listening Classrooms

Teaching listening is not an easy task, especially for ESL teaching. Apparently, traditional Chinese teaching methodology cannot fulfill the requirements. Students feel bored and unmotivated to learn, and the input is far from enough. Even if enough input is provided, how to promote the satisfactory output is still a tough question for ESL teachers to solve. Hence, when applying English songs to the college ESL listening classrooms, some strategies shall be used to better improve the effectiveness of teaching.

English songs have many advantages; however there are some places we need

to consider. Firstly, input is important to students. Different students may have different appetites. It is important to fulfill the majority of the students' requirements. Teachers can make the surveys or investigations on students to get to know their preferences first. Teachers can either give the list for students to choose or ask some questions to narrow down the items. Secondly, it is vital for teachers to relate English songs with the course closely. On one hand, they cultivate students' cultural awareness. On the other hand, they achieve teaching objectives. That is to say, teachers shall choose the songs carefully, of course not all songs are appropriate to use in the ESL classroom (eg: pornography, controversial religious issues). Teachers shall listen to the song before the class. Even if the theme is appropriate, it should relate to teaching objectives closely. For example, if the text is about the American culture, Tim Mcgraw's "Live Like You were Dying" is a good choice. Some parts of the lyrics was like this: "I went skydiving, I went Rocky Mountain climbing, I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fu Man Chu". Among this, skydiving, Rocky Mountain and bull riding are typical American cultural elements. Teachers can extend to teaching students American cultures through this song. If the themes of the song are totally unrelated to the objectives, it is just wasted time. Thirdly, the aim is not merely for students to appreciate the song, but to practice the listening skills and learn the linguistic features. The process of listening songs strengthens our ears and brains. We practiced our listening; our brains build the connection between the songs and the language or culture.

At the pre-listening stage, students shall get ready for what they will hear.

Teachers can play the background music to relax the atmosphere or give some hints to students about what kind of songs he or she will play next. Students can use their background knowledge to predict what teachers will play and what activities may be involved (Richards, 2005). This stage is rather short; generally it only lasts for a few minutes. The aim of this stage is to arouse students' awareness and activate background knowledge. The practice for students using background knowledge is really helpful for them to improve their listening skills. It is important for students to make the predictions to the listening materials. For example, what questions might be asked; the purposes for teachers to use those materials; what might the materials be about. That is what we shall do for the pre-listening stage. Just as a saying goes, "soldiers did not fight in war without preparation." After that, we can move to the next stage: while-listening stage.

At the while-listening stage, students practice their listening skills through exercises (Richards, 2005). Listening skills shall not be considered as an isolated skill, but integrated with speaking, reading and writing. Various activities may be designed to fulfill students' different requirements: for example, true/false questions, or gap-filling task (Lieb, 2008; Pan, 2008). For the true/false questions, teachers can write down few accounts according to the themes or main ideas of the lyrics, and after that let students judge whether the accounts are correct or not. This activity testifies students' understandings on listening materials and finds out whether or not students have problems in understanding the materials. If the majority of the students did not get the answers teachers might reconsider the difficulty of the materials or the

arrangement of the relative task. For the gap-filling task, teachers can type the lyrics that omitted some key words, phrases or even short sentences. Teachers hand out the lyrics and play the recording. For the first time, students need to have a general idea about the lyrics; for the second time, students can fill out the blanks and have a deep understanding; for the last time, students can check their answers. This activity is really helpful for it cultivates students' note-taking abilities and helps them to learn the words, phrases and some useful expressions. Sometimes students can even get the cultural knowledge, for the pop songs contain a lot of useful linguistic features. For example, one sentence from the lyric of Westlife's "Seasons in the Sun" is "I was the black sheep of the family." Black sheep originally comes from religion; here it should be interpreted as "the odd within the family."

Besides the previous activities I mentioned above, I think oral practice is also important. Teachers can choose English songs with pure pronunciation and let students imitate or sing. Pop songs with pure intonation and positive themes can be a good choice for teachers to use for it is the authentic material to learn and bring students good feelings. As I have mentioned, listening teaching teachers shall not let students receive the information passively. This activity integrated listening with reading and speaking, which improves the effectiveness of teaching listening. Group discussion also needs to be included if the classes have enough time. For the Chinese college ESL listening classrooms, most of the time students have few chances to have a discussion. Teachers can assign the task to let students have a discussion on the themes or singers of the song. The aim of this stage is for teachers to find out students'

listening problems and help them cultivate listening skills and strategies (Pan, 2008).

Besides that I think that the discussion helps improve the classrooms atmosphere,

which will be a great shift comparing to traditional Chinese classrooms.

Post-listening stage is often neglected by many Chinese ESL teachers (Pan,

2008). Actually, the post-listening stage is also important for college ESL listening

teaching. At this stage, students can strengthen the listening skills or strategies they

have learned and give responses to comprehension (Richards, 2005). Many activities

may be applied into this stage, such as problem solving, summarizing (Pan, 2008),

group discussion and writing (Richards, 2005). For problem solving activities teachers

can assign the tasks to let students do some researches or surveys on relative topics,

which is a good opportunity for students to improve their communicative competence

and gain more knowledge. Summarizing is an advanced-level activity compared to

gap-filling task or true/false question from the while-listening level. Summarizing

puts forward more requirements on students' ability, not only to understand the

materials, but also to interpret it with your own words briefly. Group discussion gives

an opportunity for everyone to share their opinions and improve their sense of

cooperation. Some writing activities are also important since teaching listening is not

isolated, it should be integrated with reading, speaking and writing. For example,

teachers can let students recompose the songs' lyrics with some of their own words or

write a reflection on the song or teachers' activities used in the classrooms. From that

teachers can know more about students' thoughts and the effectiveness of todays'

teaching. It will be helpful for teachers' to make improvements in future teaching.

An old Chinese saying goes "Giving him a fish is no better than teaching him how to fish." Chinese teachers concern much on lecturing, while American teachers prefer the variation of teaching methods (Jin, 2005). The role of ESL teachers shall be a guide rather than an instructor to students. Among the three stages, the more important thing is to practice listening skills and arouse students' interests rather than simply focus on the context of the materials.

Summary

Teaching listening to ESL college students are both difficult and important. First of all, there are many factors affecting listening comprehension, which includes affective factors, psychological factors, cognitive factors and input factors. Second, the role of listening was neglected by people for a quite a long time as the passive and isolate learning process. Third, there exists many problems college ESL listening teaching in China. For example, the out-dated teaching method and bored-some teaching materials.

Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (MIT) clearly presents the relationship of music and intelligence. Since musical and language ability coexist in the same area of the brain, it is useful for teachers to introduce English songs into college ESL listening classrooms. It is easy for students to memorize and learn. What is more, English songs can create a relaxed atmosphere and provide the authentic input. Many advantages it have, teachers shall still be careful to choose the songs with proper themes, suitable difficulty and closely objectives. Sometimes teachers can even give students the options to choose the songs if the songs they choose are really good.

Different strategies for ESL listening teachers may use to introduce the English pop songs into classrooms. During pre-listening stage teachers can use background music to attract students' attention. For the while-listening stage, target exercises such as true/false question and gap-filling task helps teacher to testify students' understandings. The post-listening stage is also important for teachers to get the valuable feedbacks of current teaching and make improvements for the future.

CHAPER III

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through a review of literature, it is obvious that teaching ESL listening is not an easy task. The traditional Chinese teaching methods makes students bored and unmotivated to learn. Listening is not a passive process; the characteristics of the listening comprehension indicate that listening is an active process; teachers need to have interaction with students. Teachers shall exert all their efforts to let students participate in the ESL classroom.

There are several factors affecting listening comprehension; affective factors, psychological factors, cognitive factors and input factors. For college ESL teachers, they need to provide enough input, concern and guide students' learning behavior and create a relaxing atmosphere for ESL classes.

Nowadays, there exist some problems in ESL listening teaching. For the students' side, many of them lack listening training and instruction in their earlier education before entering into college, which may cause teaching ESL listening to be difficult. Many teachers just simply disregard listening. They just point out the difficult and keywords and then play the recording and check the answers. The traditional task-based teaching cannot provide enough input and dampen students' interests.

Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is important to teaching college ESL listening. Gardner believes that instructors shall prepare for various kinds of teaching methods, in order to provide students enough experiences. Musical intelligence is one

of the intelligences. Neurologists find that music and language occur in the same area of the brain. Accordingly, using English songs in ESL classrooms improves students' linguistic competence.

English songs have beautiful melodies, containing culture and linguistic knowledge, and also it is highly memorable and motivating. The features of English songs determine that it has its place in ESL listening teaching. It provides enough input, lightens the atmosphere and enhances students' motivation to learn. However, not all the English songs are suitable to use in the ESL listening classrooms. Songs containing negative themes shall be abandoned for students may get the bad influences from it, the difficulty should be proper to teach (raps shall not be used due to the high tempo and the vague pronunciation), and the length should be controlled and English songs should be related closely to ESL teachers' teaching objectives (the aim is not simply to listen to the song, but use the songs as good assistance in ESL listening teaching). If teachers are not sure whether the song is proper or not to use in the ESL listening classrooms, they can simply change to another song or ask their colleagues or friends to give some suggestions. Sometimes it is a good choice to give students the say to choose the songs, if the songs they choose are really beneficial for teaching, and then why not use them?

During the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stage, different strategies for ESL teaching may be used to apply English songs into the ESL listening classrooms. Pre-listening is the stage to arouse students' interests and activate background knowledge; songs used in this stage help students to practice their

listening skills, and to make the prediction on the materials. While-listening is the stage for teachers to find out students' listening problems and help them cultivate listening skills and strategies. Some activities involved in this stage including true/false questions, gap-filling task, group discussion and oral practice. Those activities testify students' understandings on listening materials and integrate listening with other language abilities such as speaking and reading. Post-listening stage is often neglected by many teachers and it is the stage to strengthen students' listening skills and strategies. Many activities may apply into this stage, such as problem solving and summarizing. Those activities have higher requirements on students, for example the ability to summarize their own ideas into their own words. Students cultivate their ability for both thinking independently and working cooperation. What is more, teachers can get valuable feedback: are there any problems in designing those activities? Did the set of objectives get met? Post-listening stage helps teachers to gain the experiences from current teaching and make improvements in future teaching.

Throughout the paper, there are some areas that need to be further explored. Firstly, it is highly recommended that quantitative research can be done to testify the relationship between musical intelligence and the academic performance of Chinese ESL students. Secondly, studies need to be done concerning the strategies of English songs use in the Chinese ESL listening classrooms to testify the effectiveness of strategies and find out whether such strategies have limitations. Thirdly, concerning the selection of English songs, some experts suggest that teachers shall choose the

songs by themselves; others argue that teachers shall listen for students' ideas. Hence,

a comparative study can be done on these two choices to testify which choice is more

effective to Chinese ESL College listening teaching.

References

Acat, B. (2005). Applicability of the multiple intelligence theory to the process of Organizing and Planning of Learning and Teaching. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 14(1), 54-72.

Akabari, R., & Hosseini, K. (2008). Multiple intelligences and language learning strategies: Investigating possible relations. *An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics*, 36(2), 141-155.

Brand, M. (2007). Music, Asia and English: Use of pop-songs in ESL instruction. *Asia-pacific Journal for Arts Education*, 5(2), 66-75.

Campbell, R. (2011). The power of the listening ear. *English Journal*, *100*(5), 66-70.

Cathlin, M., & Viviene, E.G. (1999). Transfer of learning: Concept and process. *Social Work Education*, 18(2), 183-194.

Chang, A., & Ching, S. Y. (2008). Sources of listening anxiety in learning English as a foreign language. *Perceptual&Motor Skills*, 106(1), 21-34.

Cook, V. (2000). *Second language learning and language teaching.* 2nd edition. Beijing: Foreign language teaching and research press.

Dulay, J., & Burt, M. (1975). Creative construction in second language learning and teaching. In M.Burt and H.Dulay(eds), *New directions in second language learning, teaching, and bilingual education*. Washington DC:TESOL.

Farrug, D. (2008). How music helps language learning. Retrieved from

http://diane-farrug.suite101.com/why-use-music-to-learn-language-a42493

Findley, M. J., & Cooper, H. M. (1983). Locus of control and academic achievement: a literature review. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(2), 419-27.

Fonseca-Mora, M.C., Toscano-Fuentes, C., & Wermke, K. (2011).Melodies that help: The relation between lauguage aptitude and musical intelligence. *Anglistik International Journal of English Studies*, 22(1), 101-118.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Gatbonton, E., & Segalowitz, N. (1988). Creative automatization: Principles for promoting fluency within a communicative framework. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 473-492.

Hedge, T. (2007). *Teaching and Learning English in the language classroom*. Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press.

Helding, L. (2010). Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences: Musical intelligence. *Journal of Singing*, 66(3), 325-330.

Ingrid, W & Norman, M. (2011). Can music in School live up to its promise*? Education Canada,* 51(2), 30-2.

Janusik, L. (2002). Teaching listening: What do we do? What should we do? *International Journal of Listening*, 16，5-39.

Jiang, N. (2004). English songs in teaching listening. *Journal of Xichang Teachers*

College, 16(1), 39-41.

Jin, Y. H. (2005). Challenges of academic listening in English: Reports by Chinese

students. *College Student Journa*l, 39(3),553-569.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language learning*. Oxford:

Pergamon.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York:

Longman.

Lems, K. (2001). Using music in Adult ESL classroom. Retrieved from

http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/hww/results/external_link_

maincontentframe.jhtml?_DARGS=/hww/results/results_common.jhtml.44.

Lems, K. (2005). Music works: Music for adult English language learners. *New

Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 107, 13-21.

Liao, Y. (2006). English songs and teaching college English Listening. *Journal of

Yibin University*, 5, 95-97.

Lieb, M. (2008). Listening activities using popular music. Unpublished manuscript,

meji university, Tokoy, Japan. Retrieved from

http://tht-japan.org/proceedings/2008/m_lieb30-45.pdf

Liu, S. F. (2008). On cognitive structure and listening comprehension. *Journal of

Qinghai Normal University*, 1, 129-132.

Lynch, L. M. (2008). Using popular songs to improve language listening.

Retrieved from

http://ezinearticles.com/?Using-Popular-Songs-to-Improve-Language-Listening-Comprehension-Skills&id=104984

Maess, B., & Koelsch, S. (2001). Musical syntax processed in Broca's area: An MEG study. Nature Neuroscience, 4, 540-545.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*, 2nd edition. New York: Van Nostrand.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality,* 2nd edition. New York: Harper and Row.

Mcclellan, J.A., & Conti, G. J. (2008). Identifying the multiple intelligences of your Students. *Journal of Adult Education*, 37(1), 13-32.

Mitchell, R., & Myles, R. (1998). *Second language learning theories*. London: Arnold.

Nisbet, J., & Schucksmith, J. (1986). *Learn to learn*. London: routledge and kegan paul.

Pan, J. B. (2008). Improving the Teaching of Listening, Retrieved from http://www.ggez.net/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=492

Payne, M. (2011). Exploring Stephen Krashen's 'i+1' acquisition model in the classroom. *Lingustic&Education*, 22(4), 419-429.

Qiao, C. H. (2005). An inquiry into problems in English listening teaching and its countermeasure. *Journal of Chongqing Three Gorgers University*, 21(4), 91-93.

Qiu, L. J. (2006). The special role of English songs in listening course. *Journal of Suzhou College*, 21(3), 74-75.

Rappaport, H. (2005). The infinite variety of listening logs: Your students may astound you. *Music Educators Journal*, 91(3), 29-33.

Richards, J. (2005). Second Thoughts on Teaching Listening. *A Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 36(1), 85-92.

Rost, M. (2005). *Teaching and researching listening*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning, *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 17-46.

Self-image-Genes. (n.d.). Musical intelligence. Retrieved from

http://www.wilywalnut.com/musical_intelligence/musical-intelligence.html.

Singhal, V. (2011). Defining second language acquisition. Retrieved from

http://www.brighthub.com/education/languages/articles/70729.aspx

Swain, M. (1995). *Three functions of output in second language learning*. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds), Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics: studies in Honor of H.G. Widowson (pp. 125-144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ur, P. (2000). *Teaching listening comprehension*. Beijing: People education press.

Xu, F. (2010). The Role of Input and Interaction in Second Language Acquisition. *Cross - Cultural Communication*, 6(1), 11-17.

Vernon, S. (2006). How to use songs for teaching English. Retrieved from

http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Use-Songs-For-Teaching-English&id=4860963

Wang, B. A. (2008). Application of popular English Songs in EFL Classroom Teaching. *Humanising Language Teaching,* Retrieved from

http://www.hltmag.co.uk/jun08/less03.htm

Watson, J. (2011). Song history: Jingle Bells. Retrieved from

http://www.helium.com/items/2078416-song-history-jingle-bells

Whyte, I., & Mould, M. (2011). Can music in schools live up to its promise? *Education Canada*, 51(2), 30-32.

Xiao, Y. D. (2009). The affective filter in second language teaching. *Asian Social Science,* 5(8), 162-165.

Yang, L. (2008). Discussion on teaching method of college listening. *Journal of Shanxi Agriculture University*, 2(7), 202-204.

Zhang, J. (2007). On the application of Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis" in English Listening Classroom Activities. *Journal of Hotan Teachers College*, 27(3), 127-128.