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SONGS AND POEMS AS EFFECTIVE AGENTS IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

NAZARAKUNOV OMURBEK USONOVICH

TOKTOSUNOVA GULCHEHRA RAIMBERDIEVNA

Osh Humanitarian Pedagogical Institute, Osh, Kyrgyzstan

The article examines some ways and means of teaching songs and poems in English to students at all stages of language learning.

Songs and poems are a natural part of learning English at an early stage of education at college or at the next stages. Even teachers who are not musically inclined can teach young learners songs and poems because it is one of the easiest ways of teaching phonetics, grammar and lexis in the classroom [1, 27].

Researches show that learners actually do learn better through songs, poems and games. There are many reasons for this. Intrinsic motivation occurs when children engage in an activity, such as a hobby, without obvious external incentives. This form of motivation has been studied by social and educational psychologists since the early 1970s. It is usually associated with high educational achievement and enjoyment by students. Students are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they attribute their educational results to internal factors that they can control, believe they can be effective agents in reaching desired goals, are interested in mastering a language, rather than just rote-learning to achieve good grades. That is why it is important to motivate them to want to do the class activities. Children will be more likely to join in and enjoy themselves when given an option to participate in activities that incorporate music, poems, play and physical movements [2, 43]. By using games, play, movement and song, all things that most learners enjoy, learning language will be a fun and positive experience.

The second reason is the theory of activity-based learning or total physical response. This theory states that movement stimulates natural networks and activates mental capacities, which are not activated when sitting at a desk. Children are more likely to be curious when presented with music, games and total physical response activities, and therefore are more likely to learn and retain knowledge. But experienced teachers know that songs and poems are not also an excellent way to begin or end a lesson. You can start by helping students make the transition from their native language into English as the lesson warm-up. Whenever possible it is best to select a piece of verse that is directly related to the content of the lesson.

There are other facts that explain the importance of listening to music and poem in the classroom. When a teacher uses songs and poems to teach a language, he or she is relying on absorption by repetition. The more children hear and experience the vocabulary, the more likely they will learn it. Certainly learners do not want to sit in a class simply repeating words and what they mean. The fact is that the environment of play and music is a relaxed environment and allows the students to learn without the stress or fear of possible failure. This class starts with a focus on listening. The focus then switches to vocabulary and interpreting the song. Finally, you will be encouraged to talk about the song.

Warm up: "I will" is a love song so you might want to discuss these questions with a friend or in a group.

1. Have you ever been in love and are you in love now?
2. How do you imagine your future love(s)?
3. Listen to the song "I will". Judging from the words and/or the mood of the song, how do you think the singer feels (happy, sad, angry, nervous, etc.)?
4. Fill in the blanks while you listen. You may need to listen more than once. Use the following words: endear, who knows, catch, lifetime, mattered.

The Beatles: "I Will" lyrics

How long I've loved you
 You know I love you still
 Will I wait a lonely
 If you want me to-I will.
 For if I ever saw you
 I didn't your name
 But it never really
 I will always feel the same.

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Love you forever and forever
 Love you with all my heart
 Love you whenever we're together
 Love you when we're apart.
 And when at last I find you
 Your song will fill the air
 Sing it loud so I can hear you
 Make it easy to be near you
 For the things you do you to me
 You know I will
 I will.

Some lines are highlighted in the song that I think are important. As it said in the introduction, this is a love song. The interesting part is that it's a love song for someone the singer has never met.

The Beatles: "I Will" lyrics

Who knows how long I've loved you
 You know I love you still
 Will I wait a lonely lifetime
 If you want me to I will.
 For if I ever saw you
 I didn't catch your name
 But it never really mattered
 I will always feel the same.
 Love you forever and forever
 Love you with all my heart
 Love you whenever we're together
 Love you when we're apart.
 And when at last I find you
 Your song will fill the air
 Sing it loud so I can hear you
 Make it easy to be near you
 For the things you do endear you to me
 You know I will
 I will.

So now you know why I think this is about someone the singer doesn't know. I think the singer is waiting for his perfect love. You don't have to agree with me and I'd love to hear your opinions. Singing class activity is good for students who are at the beginning of pre-intermediate to advanced levels, because they might be ready easily to express their opinions, give their arguments and feedbacks to the teacher's singing class, etc. [3, 85].

There are different ways that songs and poems can be presented to students. Often the first step is to introduce any key vocabulary that can be unfamiliar. Props, such as real objects or pictures of objects, can be used to present the key vocabulary for a song or a poem. The props and actions not only help students to remember the words and meanings of new words but also help them to remember the context or situation depicted in the piece of verse [4, 41]. For instance, in the verse 'blowing in the wind' the context is different from the meaning of the verb to blow and the word 'wind' with the preposition 'in'. Here teachers might explain students the meanings of the above mentioned words with the help of gesture using just a piece of paper blown into the space. In such a way we can get students understand the meaning of the whole verse 'the answer my friend is blowing in the wind' and the context of the song (from the song of Peter, Paul and Mary "Blowing in the wind") because the central idea is given in the title of the song [5, 31] Or showing pictures of a 'white dove', 'the sand', 'cannonballs', etc. from the whole song

"Blowing in the wind"

1. How many roads must a man walk down before they call him a man and how many seas must a white dove sail Before she sleeps in the sand? How many times must the cannonballs fly? Before they're forever banned? The answer my friend is blowing in the wind, the answer is blowing in the wind.

2. How many years must a mountain exist Before it is washed to the sea? How many years can some people exist Before they're allowed to be free? How many times can a man turn his head? And pretend that he just doesn't see? The answer my friend.

3. How many times must a man look up before he can see the sky? How many ears must one man have before he can hear people cry? How many deaths will it take till he knows? That too many people have died? The answer my friend.

Above given key vocabulary of the song is useful to introduce learners to pieces of verse one line at a time. The teacher says one line of the song using the props or actions that illustrate it, and then the learners read the line. This procedure continues until all the lines of the targeted piece of verse have been read and said.

Next the learners read the first part of the song using props, actions or pictures to help them remember the words. In addition, teachers may have students listen to the song and then sing together with the singer line after line making pauses for discussions and interpretations [6, 67]. Students like to sing songs at the lesson but they don't like to do traditional Grammar or Phonetic exercises like 'filling in the gaps' with prepositions or articles, etc. Therefore, the above mentioned simple methods will get their interest in learning the language, remember maximum vocabulary and it is useful for developing students' critical thinking skills.

Teachers can give various instructions according to discussion of the above given song, for example, for the assessment 'How would you describe this song? Write your evaluation of the song in full sentences on the back of the form, etc. Before giving this activity instructors might first discuss and explain unknown words in different ways using critical thinking approaches with other examples of other situations. Examples from students' everyday life stories would be more interesting and more useful for remembering the meanings of them. For beginners teachers can use pictures, photos depending on the meaning of the song and students' learning styles [7, 117]. Students also can create innovations for their favorite songs and poems. Innovations are different versions of pieces of verse created by substituting individual words for some of the original words. When students create their own innovations, they substitute words in the verse with their own words. The number and types of words substituted will vary depending upon the song or poem. Look at the examples below.

Original

I'm going up to London can't you see,
I'm riding in my bicycle to buy a cup of tea. Innovation of
I'm going up to London can't you see,
I'm flying in my airplane to buy a cup of tea.

Learners can make their own personal songbooks by copying the texts from the board or using photocopies of the texts. They can also be provided with pictures, photos given to illustrate the meanings of the definite words from the songs or poems. If learners have created their own innovations for songs, they should make sure they put them into their songbooks, complete with illustrations.

In conclusion, all experienced language teachers know that the young learners are attracted by colorful things, actions and movements, variety of activities that include songs, short poems, cartoons and toys that will cooperate in physical and mental development of children. The teacher should choose a small song or a poem with simple words that will be understood by all children. The kids will learn the words acting them out. This activity will enhance their vocabulary, improve their speech and positively impact on their learning process.

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