

**The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS), 2021**

**Volume 20, Pages 91-95**

**ICRESS 2021: International Conference on Research in Education and Social Sciences**

## **Using Songs to Motivate Students**

**Lali TAVADZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

**Ivdit DIASAMIDZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

**Natia KATAMADZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

**Abstract:** The article deals with the ways songs can be used in the ESL classroom to motivate students to learn English and enhance their involvement. One of the big problems we all face, whether teaching English to children or adults, is maintaining learners' interest throughout our lessons. Consequently, we often have to be very creative in the techniques we use. Singing songs can be relaxing for students and teachers alike as they give us great opportunity to change routine classroom activities into entertainment and fun. What makes music such a great teaching tool is its ability to develop learners' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing and can be used in various ways to teach and practice vocabulary, pronunciation, stress, sentence structures. They can be used as language tasks, focusing on particular material and can be adapted to suit the specific purpose a teacher might wish to teach. The article deals with the different ways and activities that can motivate and enhance students' involvement in meaningful tasks according to the needs and goals the teacher sets for them to reach.

**Key words:** Listening, interest, activities, teaching tool, tasks, specific purpose

### **Introduction**

Once you are encouraged to do something, you are filled with enthusiasm and motivation. These magic things – encouragement and motivation can make you move mountains, reach the target, “score the goal”. Teachers should always think about the ways that can fill their students with “can do attitude”. Students' abilities vary. Some of them are good at listening while others find it very easy to put some interesting thoughts on the paper, some enjoy reading and can perceive hidden ideas thus showing the ability of reading between the lines and some of them show good communication skills. While talking about the tasks that can motivate students one of the things that should be mentioned are songs! Songs can create positive atmosphere and can be relaxing for both, the students and teachers. They have the power to involve every single student in work, even the ones who lack courage, enthusiasm or ability to feel like the part of the whole. Songs can be used in a number of ways depending on our aims and objectives. So, they can help teachers develop learners' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing and can be used in various ways to teach and practice pronunciation, rhythm, stress, intonation patterns, sentence structures. They can be used as language tasks, focusing on particular material, vocabulary and grammar. They can be used to develop listening

---

- This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

- Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the Conference

© 2021 Published by ISRES Publishing: [www.isres.org](http://www.isres.org)

comprehension, writing skills and speaking. Songs can be adapted to suit the specific purpose a teacher might wish to teach.

## **The Importance of Songs in EFL Classes**

Teachers often seek for the ways to make their students repeat the structures and sentences or new vocabulary and phrases they studied before they fade from their memory. Many course-books are not equipped with the right and meaningful repetition-oriented tasks and besides many students find them quite boring. The way out can be found in using meaningfully selected songs giving us a chance to increase repetition practice maintaining students' interest and involvement.

“Language teaching can be defined as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning.” (Stern, 1983, p.21). Songs can be used in a number of ways according to our aims and needs. They can be of some help introducing the new topic, practicing grammar structures or revising tenses, teaching and mastering new vocabulary together with rhythm, stress and pronunciation practice. Another thing that songs can be used for might be connected with fostering discussions, broadening the awareness of different cultures and knowledge about the world. On the whole, one of the greatest advantages of using songs in the classroom is that they change the class routine, provide variety as they are enjoyable and relaxing thus creating student-oriented environment.

“Many of us have experienced with amazement how quick students are at learning songs. It is also a common experience to forget nearly everything we learn in another language except the few songs that we learnt. For a variety of reasons songs stick in our minds and become parts of us, and lend themselves easily to exploitation in the classroom.” (Murphy, 1992) The cited idea proves the significance of using songs in the classroom environment though many find them unimportant, ineffective and failure. “The song stuck in my head phenomenon” also seems to reinforce the idea that songs work on our short and long-term memory”. (Murphy, 1992)

On the other hand, it is worth noting that for some students the word “listening” is daunting. The feeling of fear might be connected with the fact that students pay attention to every single word concentrating on the meaning of separate words rather than comprehending the idea and realizing the sense of the strings of words. It happens because they are used to listening to the speech of their teachers speaking slowly and clearly thus giving them a chance to concentrate on the idea of single words. The learning habit mentioned above makes them worry a lot and feel fussy before or during listening activities. Learning process, causing negative feelings can be the direct way to demotivation. Teachers should make sure that learning process is based on motivation and encouragement, that there are no demotivating factors blocking the way to enthusiasm, involvement, trust, self-esteem, enjoyment and pleasure that learning can present. As long as many students find listening one of the challenging activities, teachers should think of more creative ways to make it as interesting and enjoyable as possible. Motivation is a vital element in affective learning. Williams et. al. (1997, p.129) deciphered motivation as “a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)”. Creating positive atmosphere with motivational activities can be the huge step to success, reaching our aims and objectives. Thus, listening to English songs can be interesting and enjoyable at the same time. Students will find themselves full of stamina, less worried and involved in the learning process. Songs might feel like learning a language without too much effort and picking a language, concentrating not only on single words but the units of lexical items and authentic phrases “intruding” and staying in our mental lexicon in a pretty painless way. Students develop and master their pronunciation concentrating on the sounds and the way they are chained together, they enrich their vocabulary, practise grammar structures, become aware of other cultures and values. Actually, students learn implicitly and unconsciously giving the natural way to the development of their language awareness. . “Language awareness is not taught by the teacher or by the course-book; it is developed by the learner. Language awareness is an internal, gradual, realization of the realities of language use” (Bolitho et al., 2003, p.252).

As the things mentioned above testify, all the obstacles concerning students' fears can be solved simply and easily and listening to the songs can be of great value to foreign language teaching. And I would like to cite Murphey's words here: “What is even more amazing is that it also seems easier to sing a language than to speak it”. (Murphey, 1992).

## **Songs as Language Teaching Tools**

“In our time, it is hard to escape music and songs as it occupies ever more of the world around us: in operating theatres (for heart transplants and childbirth), restaurants and cafes, shopping malls, at sports events, in our cars and literally everywhere for those tuned in to a Walkman. It would seem that the only place music and song is slow to catch on is in schools”. (Murphey, 1992)

It was already stated that songs can inspire learners and fill them with the passion of getting knowledge, fostering their comprehension and awareness. Utilizing songs in the language learning environment can help mastering the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) in as much effective ways as possible.

### **Listening/Reading**

One of the most significant factors of the language is that it is an essential tool for communication. Language is used to exchange ideas, to share information, to express our attitudes and so-so forth. It's not only the use of language and shaping it in the flow of words we select from our language store that is crucial to communication. We should listen in order to understand. Listening skill is the way to effective communication. While mastering listening skills we take the role of a listener whose very first mission is to listen in order to process the variety of language heard. There are a lot of drills on improving pronunciation that students find boring but listening to the songs having similar repetitive structures as drills sounds a better, more enjoyable and inspiring idea. Listening to the songs can help to improve listening/reading skills in a number of ways:

- ✓ Improve the pronunciation of frequently mispronounced words, thus improve reading of the same words as well
- ✓ Study the words student find difficult to remember
- ✓ Get used to the phonetic changes characteristic to fast speech
- ✓ Become aware of the native speech characteristics, words flowing into each other

### **Speaking**

Speaking can be the most important skill to be developed for the learners of the foreign language. When we speak we form verbal communication, we have a desire to share information, we pick the language from our mental lexicon, we are engaged in reaching our communicative goals in order to make it effective and appropriate. As we know communication process is goal-driven and it will never be conducted without having certain aims and targets to be reached in our mind. Does it remind of something? Sure, language teaching process! The role of the teacher is to guide the students, lead to the hidden and help them reach for the stars having certain and specific aims and objectives, clear instructions set in advance as stated criteria guarantees success. How can songs be transformed into speaking tasks? Some suggestions can be made:

- ✓ Song titles can be used to motivate students make predictions concerning:
  - a) the content of the song
  - b) vocabulary/words that might appear in the content
- ✓ Songs can form the ground for the discussion and debates:
  - a) Problems
  - b) Characters
  - c) Values
  - d) Positive/negative points
  - e) Problem-solving
  - f) The lyrics can stimulate classroom discussions

## **Writing**

Written form of communication is as important as the ones mentioned above leading us to the idea that writing is as important skill as any other demanding equal attention and development. To make writing enjoyable for students, songs can be used as:

- ✓ Gap-fill tasks
- ✓ Error-correction activities
- ✓ Ordering the jumbles verses
- ✓ Writing the end/adding the next verse
- ✓ Writing on the important point seen in the song
- ✓ If you were...

As analyses show it is possible to summarize the following points: to begin with, rhythm, stress and intonation patterns can be practiced with the help of English songs. What is more important songs can be one of the enjoyable ways to teach vocabulary and grammar. The last but not the least, they are absolutely welcome to develop listening comprehension, writing skills and speaking.

## **Conclusions**

It is said that politicians gain people's love and respect using feeling-oriented speeches. Repetition of the words and phrases that touch feelings make people thrilled and a lot of political figures popular. Thus, the target is hit. The same thing can be said about music. Music fills us with energy and enthusiasm, helps to relax and get rid of negative emotions, forms the ground for motivation, shapes the idea of the world. All the things mentioned are necessary in language classes as positive atmosphere is the solid ground for building the castle of knowledge on it. Moreover, once feelings are touched, when emotions overweight, nothing can stop reaching the goals.

People say: "All Roads Lead to Rome". Yes, that's it, but the thing is which road you take. The road making your journey unforgettable, interesting and enjoyable is the best road ever. The same is with teaching. Teaching/learning process may show problems if the "wrong road" is taken. Choosing activities that are effective and enjoyable at the same time make learning process both educational and fun.

Using songs can help make language learning automatic as language patterns can be processed and remembered unconsciously leading to the use of target language in a communicative way. What makes music such a great teaching tool is its ability to develop learners' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing and can be used in various ways to teach and practice vocabulary, pronunciation, stress, sentence structures. They can be used as language tasks, focusing on particular material and can be adapted to suit the specific purpose a teacher might wish to teach.

## **Scientific Ethics Declaration**

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

## **References**

- Bolitho, R., Carter, R., Hughes, R., Ivanič, R., Masuhara, H., & Tomlinson, B. (2003). Ten questions about language awareness. *ELT journal*, 57(3), 251-259.
- Cook, G. (1997). Language play, language learning. *ELT journal*, 51(3), 224-231.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition: Oxford Introduction to Language Study*. Oxford University Press.
- Graham, C. (1992). *Singing, Chanting, Telling Tales: Arts in the Language Classroom*. New Jersey
- Harmer, J (2007). *How to Teach English*. Edinburgh. Pearson

- Jensen, E. (2000). *Music with the Brain in Mind*. The Brain Store Inc.
- Murphy, T. (1992) *Music and Song*. Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., Rodgers, T. (2008). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press
- Shen, C. (2009). Using English songs: An enjoyable and effective approach to ELT. *English language teaching*, 2(1), 88-94.
- Stern, H.H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

---

### Author Information

---

**Lali TAVADZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University,  
35/32 Ninoshvili/Rustaveli str., Georgia  
[lali.tavadze@gmail.com](mailto:lali.tavadze@gmail.com)

**Ivdit DIASAMIDZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University  
35/32 Ninoshvili/Rustaveli str., Georgia

**Natia KATAMADZE**

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University  
35/32 Ninoshvili/Rustaveli str., Georgia

---

**To cite this article:**

Tavadze, L., Diasamidze, I & Katamadze, N. (2021). Using songs to motivate students. *The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational and Social Sciences*, 20, 91-95.