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HOW TO TEACH SONGS

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o'qituvchisi

Abstract: This article is devoted to the formation of students how to teach songs this is an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in the case of YLs who listen to their teacher's instructions in the form of commands and then follow those instructions.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola universitetda ingliz tilini o'qitish jarayonida talabalarning qo'shiqlarni qanday o'rgatish kerakligini bu juda foydali va moslashuvchan o'qitish usuli, ayniqsa o'qituvchining ko'rsatmalarini buyruqlar shaklida tinglaydigan va keyin ushbu ko'rsatmalarga amal qiladigan YLlar uchun.

Key words: teaching technique, teacher's instructions, form of commands, follow.

Kalit so'zlar: o'qitish texnikasi, o'qituvchining ko'rsatmalari, buyruqlar shakli, amal qiling.

A word of caution is necessary. As language teachers, we should always bear in mind that our main responsibility is to teach the target language. No matter how fun and enjoyable song activities may be for YLs, we should not get carried away

by the music and rhythm of songs. Our main responsibility is not to teach singing skills, but to teach the target language. Therefore, if songs are used ineffectively, they can easily become mere entertainment and pleasurable interruptions in the school day that, in the long term, result in boredom and a lack of interest. There should be a clear reason in the language teacher's mind as to why and how to use a song. Songs can be an effective means of developing children's language skills only when they are well integrated into a scheme of work and carefully selected for the cognitive and linguistic needs of pupils. Kirsch (2008) states that listening activities should be based on meaningful, appropriate, and authentic texts (e.g., a story, song, or poem) that assist listening and remembering and that match the language and grade level of pupils. Ersöz (2007, 20) suggests that teachers should be careful to choose songs that:

- contain simple and easily understood lyrics
- link with a topic or vocabulary that learners are studying in class
- contain repetitive lines
- allow children to easily do actions (to help emphasize meaning)

Songs and Total Physical Response

In relation to how to present songs to YLs, Phillips (1993) points out that we should incorporate some of the techniques from the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach (such as Listen and Do songs). TPR is built around the coordination of speech and action, focusing on teaching languages through physical activity (Richards and Rodgers 2001).

This is an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in the case of YLs who listen to their teacher's instructions in the form of commands and then follow those instructions. For example, in the introduction of new commands, the teacher first says, "Wash your hands," and then shows the action to this command. Next, the teacher gives the command and asks the students to perform the action. Similar routines are carried out all through the lesson.

Likewise, Sariçoban and Metin (2000) suggest that adding motions that parallel the words of the song makes songs more meaningful and enjoyable. Choosing action songs to which learners can dance or act while singing will ensure a lively atmosphere.

Overall, there seems to be general agreement among scholars and teachers that a three-staged approach is the most effective way to present songs to YLs. These stages are (1) pre-teaching, (2) while-teaching, and (3) post-teaching. In the following lesson plan, Listen and Do songs will be presented according to these three stages.

Songs provide opportunities for real language use

According to Sharpe (2001), songs provide an occasion for real language use in a fun and enjoyable situation. She claims that singing is a vital part of the life of a young child, inside and outside the school, and incorporating the foreign language into this fundamental activity is another way of normalizing it. Young children readily imitate sounds and often pleasurably associate singing and playing with rhythms and rhymes from an early age. Schoepp (2001) believes that the following three patterns emerge from the research on why songs are valuable in the ESL/EFL classroom:

1. Affective reasons: A positive attitude and environment enhance language learning. Songs are an enjoyable activity that contribute to a supportive, non-threatening setting with confident and active learners.
2. Cognitive reasons: Songs contribute to fluency and the automatic use of meaningful language structures
3. Linguistic reasons: In addition to building fluency, songs provide exposure to a wide variety of the authentic language students will eventually face in non-academic settings.

A lesson plan for Listen and Do songs

Before you start teaching any song, ascertain that the classroom CD player is ready

for use and that every student can hear equally well. If you are going to use handouts, distribute them to the students but tell them not to read the lyrics until after the first listening. If you are using a textbook, tell the students the page number. If you do not have a textbook or access to a photocopier, you may write the lyrics on the board or on a poster before you start.

Stage 1: Pre-teaching activities

According to Davies and Pearse (2000), this stage is useful to prepare the learners for what they are going to hear, just as we usually prepare for real-life situations. Important points to consider for this stage, mainly derived from my own teaching experience, are as follows:

- To get the students interested in the topic of the song and to warm them up, you can show a picture or other realia related to the song and ask the students what they think the song is about. Tolerate some native language use, as these are YLs and beginners.
- Next, read the title of the song aloud, and explain it through actions and visuals
- Ask the students if they already know any words in English related to the title of the song. On the board, write any English words that the students mention.
- Finally, explain the unknown vocabulary from the song through actions and visuals. There are usually very colorful pictures in YLs' books, and it is time saving to make use of them.

Stage 2: While-teaching activities

This stage is useful to help the learners understand the text through activities. As pointed out earlier, one advantage of Listen and Do songs is that students are active as they are listening. However, do not expect your students to learn the song and the accompanying actions in the first listening. They will need to listen to the song a few times. Drawing on my experience, I suggest listening to a song three or four times and carrying out the tasks described below.

First listening.

ask the students to repeat every line aloud. After you have completed the repetition

phase, use the power of TPR to teach the actions for the song. Read every line aloud, demonstrate the associated action or actions, and ask the students to do the same actions. The following well-known song, “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” (Oxford University Press 1997), illustrates the activity.

Teacher: stands in front of the class and says “head” and touches his or her head with both hands

Students: say “head” and touch their heads as shown by their teacher

Teacher: says “shoulders” and touches both shoulders

Students: say “shoulders” and touch their shoulders as shown by their teacher

Teacher: says “knees” and touches both knees

Students: say “knees” and touch their knees as shown by their teacher

Teacher: says “toes” and points to his or her toes

Students: say “toes” and point to their toes as shown by their teacher

Teacher: says “eyes,” “ears,” “mouth,” and “nose” and meanwhile touches them in order, as in the previous examples

Students: say “eyes,” “ears,” “mouth,” and “nose” and meanwhile touch the corresponding body parts as in the previous examples

At this stage, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ascertain that each student understands the vocabulary and actions in the song and that they can do the actions when they are asked. It is for the teacher to decide whether to do extra repetitions. Drawing on my own experience, I feel it is always a good idea to double-check student comprehension of words and actions; students may say they understood everything because they want to proceed to the next stage right away. To check student understanding, randomly name the vocabulary that you have taught and ask the students to do the accompanying actions.

Second listening.

Play the song again and guide the students both by singing and doing the actions that you have already taught. This time, ask the students to just listen and do the

actions under your guidance. Hearing the teacher sing the song and seeing the teacher do the actions help students overcome feelings of shyness and lack of confidence. Besides, students find it funny and interesting when they see their teacher doing the actions to a song. I believe that this situation motivates the students and prepares them for the third listening, where they will be asked to sing the song.

Third listening.

This is the stage when students are asked to sing the song along with the CD or the teacher line by line. As a teacher, check for correct intonation of language—not music—and pronunciation, and do some remedial work on any problematic intonation or pronunciation.

Fourth listening.

Ask the students to sing the complete song along with the CD and join in the singing yourself. Also, ask the students to do the accompanying actions. My own experience demonstrates that the final listening can be carried out a few times, as the students are eager and interested to sing the whole song and perform the actions.

Stage 3: Post-teaching activities

This stage is generally accepted as the stage when the teacher moves on from listening practice to focus on other language skills such as reading, speaking, and writing. In this context, Listen and Do songs are suitable for competitions, games, and simple drama activities. Some suggested examples follow.

- Depending on the number of students, divide the class into two or three groups. Assign a part of the song to each group, then ask the groups to sing along with the CD and at the same time do the actions. TPR songs in general are suitable for class, group, or individual competitions, so you may wish to turn this song into a competition by assigning points to every correct pronunciation and action. In my own teaching context I choose four representatives from each group and ask them to sing their part with the actions. This game is greatly enjoyed by the majority of

students.

- The same game may be played as a whole class as well. The teacher randomly gives commands, and any student to do an incorrect action is taken out of the game. The last remaining student is announced as the winner.
- To strengthen students' speaking skills, the teacher performs the actions randomly, without speaking, and asks the students to name the correct words or the correct commands. I generally turn this activity into a competition between the teacher and the students by giving a point for every correct student utterance to the students and a point to the teacher for the opposite case. The students in my own teaching context were very eager to beat the teacher, and hence this activity was very popular.
- To foster students' writing skills, the teacher sticks a picture, or several pictures, on the board and asks different students to come up and write what the picture shows. For example, I usually put a picture or drawing of a human body on the board for the song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" and draw arrows linked to the head, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. Next, I teach the structure "I have _____" and write an example sentence on the board (e.g., "I have brown eyes"). Then I name an item (e.g., ears) and call a student to the board. The student first has to write the word ears in the blank line. Then, the student has to write a sentence using the "I have _____" structure. ("I have two ears.") It is a good idea at this point to help your students write the sentences and ask the other students both to help and to copy the sentences from the board. A focus on literary skills at the post-teaching stage I have noticed that songs create opportunities for a smooth transition from singing and listening to reading and literacy exercises. To foster reading and literacy skills at the post-teaching stage, you may carry out the following activity. I will illustrate two examples, again using the "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" song.
- The teacher makes sets of cards with a key word from the song on each (e.g., mouth, head) and then cuts each card in half, with a part of the word on each half.

Next, the teacher asks the students to work in pairs and reconstruct the words by finding and putting together the two halves correctly. Once the students finish the activity, the teacher asks the pairs to show and read aloud the words that they have reconstructed.

- Alternatively, using the structure “I have _____,” the teacher writes different sentences on cards (e.g., “I have two eyes”) and cuts each sentence into pieces with a word on each piece. Then, the teacher asks the students to form small groups and gives the pieces for a different sentence to each group. Next, the teacher asks the groups to construct a sentence by using the words they have. Finally, each group is asked to read its sentence aloud.

Follow-up activities

The post-teaching activities that have been discussed so far are mostly immediate activities. However, it may be beneficial for the students to sing the song the next day, or for a number of days after it is taught. These repetitions of the song may be termed as long-term follow-ups, and such activities aid in the building and development of long-term memories on the part of the students. The following two activities may be tried as follow-ups when you return to a song a day or two after students first learn it.

- Prepare a worksheet consisting of the pictures of the key words from the song and leave a blank space below each picture so that students can fill it in with the right word. For example, the pictures may be of parts of the body. A focus on literary skills at the post-teaching stage I have noticed that songs create opportunities for a smooth transition from singing and listening to reading and literacy exercises. To foster reading and literacy skills at the post-teaching stage, you may carry out the following activity. I will illustrate two examples, again using the “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” song.
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A short list of online resources for songs

1. <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/songs> – This website has been designed by the British Council and provides a number of animated and subtitled songs for teaching English to YLs. There are also online pre- and post-activities and exercises for the teacher to use. The names of a few animated songs I have selected are “Over the Mountains”; “The Wheels on the Bus”; “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”; “The Leaves on the Tree”; and “My Computer Mouse.”
2. www.kididdles.com – This website also provides an extensive selection of songs, lyrics to read, and free printable lyric sheets. The names of a few songs I have selected from this website are “Bounce the Ball”; “Here We Go!”; “Let’s Move!”; “Fruit Vendor”; and “In the Kitchen.”
3. www.songsforteaching.com/index.html – This website aims to use music to promote learning and provides an extensive selection of songs that can be used with young ESL/EFL learners. The sections titled “early childhood songs” and “languages” provide a great number of songs appropriate for ESL/EFL classes. The names of a few songs I have selected from these two sections are “Can You Move Like Me?”; “Jump Up!”; “Directions”; “Counting 1 to 10”; and “Five Fingers.”

The effectiveness and importance of songs increase when they are used in combination with TPR, which involves game-like movements. It is my hope that the sample lesson plan in this course work will bring songs to the attention of

teachers of English to YLs and reinforce the practice of using songs in ESL/EFL contexts. It is important that ESL/EFL teachers understand the reasons for using songs in the YL classes and understand teaching procedures.

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