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## THE ADVANTAGES OF USING SONGS TO TEACH GRAMMAR TO FIRST-YEAR HUNG STUDENTS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar teaching is an indispensable part of English language teaching. Even with a variety of teaching strategies, grammar is still difficult and uninspiring to learn. Grammar instruction using English songs is one of the most popular techniques for teaching grammar, especially to young students (Rambe, 1999 & Fagerland, 2006). This paper aims to assess the advantages of teaching grammar through songs to first-year Hanoi University of Mining and Geology students.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To emphasize the positive points of teaching grammar through songs, the inductive technique, one of the traditional grammar teaching methods, is applied in this study. According to Nunan (1999), the inductive approach is a way whereby students discover specific grammar principles on their own by looking at examples. Therefore, the following 04 steps must be included: (1) Presentation of examples, (2) Generalization, (3) Application of the Rule, and (4) Practice (Nunan, 1999).

There is no doubt that music provides a pedagogical benefit. According to Schoep (as stated in Leena Jadhav, 2015), the use of songs by educators and researchers is beneficial for three reasons, namely, affective, cognitive, and linguistic. As for effective reasons, songs help to achieve a free-of-anxiety learning environment with a poor affective filter. Songs are used in

language classes for cognitive purposes primarily because they offer opportunities for the development of automaticity. In terms of linguistics, we may argue that songs provide learners with a wide range of language samples and help them get ready for the real-world language they might encounter. This tool can be wisely used by a teacher in conjunction with other techniques to improve the efficacy of language acquisition (Leena Jadhav, 2015).

High memorization and motivation are two benefits of using music in English classes that Murphey (2013) highlights. In other words, songs encourage students to acquire more grammar in addition to facilitating easy memorization. Besides, according to Griffee (1995), the teacher can get students to repeat language units without getting bored by using activities or exercises based on the lyrics. This encourages students to participate more actively during class. Songs frequently draw students' attention by fostering a fun and welcoming environment in the classroom (Griffee, 1995).

Songs, according to Rambe (1999), give learners a safe, non-threatening environment in which to experiment with language since they immediately relax the listeners. The use of music in a language classroom improves the class environment. It aids in lowering students' fear and removing their inhibitions regarding the target language. Furthermore, repetition of the songs aids students in maintaining grammatical notions and structures (Fagerland, 2006).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The advantages of teaching English grammar through songs were analyzed and evaluated using tests and observation. In 02 different pre-intermediate classes at Hanoi University of Mining and Geology (45 first-year students/01 class), the author taught the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional (Unit 6B - *New English File* pre-intermediate coursebook) using the four-step inductive method (i.e., Presentation - Generalization - Application - Practice) with the 1<sup>st</sup> class and through the song "If You Were A Sailboat" by Katie Melua with 03 stages (i.e., Preparation - Core Activity - Follow-up) with the 2<sup>nd</sup> class, respectively. The class observation was also applied to monitor the students' attitudes, participation, and classroom atmosphere in the two classes, which was noted for later analysis.

Specifically, in the first class, teachers presented some examples of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional, stimulated the students to generalize the forms/uses of this grammar point, then asked them to build sentences with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional. In the practice step, the students were asked to complete the sentences with the given verbs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional. In the second class, during the Preparation step, the teacher introduced the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional, and prompted the students to mention what they had already known about this grammar point, at the same time, introduced the song. When the students were ready, the teacher proceeded to the Core Activity step by asking students to complete the song lyrics with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional. Then the teacher encouraged the students to formulate the forms/structures and introduced the uses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional. With the Follow-up step, learners were asked to sing back some parts of the song.

After one week, both classes took a short grammar test including 20 sentences to put the given verbs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional. The analysis of the students' test scores and teacher's observations led to the discovery of the research findings.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the findings, learning English through songs made it easier for students to remember grammar rules. Compared to learning with Nunan's inductive method (Nunan, 1999), the students memorized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional more effectively. The analysis of test scores indicated that 91.1 % of the students (41/45 students) in the class who learned grammar through songs received scores between 7 and 10. However, only 73.3 % of the remaining class (33/45 students) who did not learn grammar through songs had this score range.

In addition, listening to music while learning grammar promoted relaxation. According to the author's observation of students' attitudes, the group of students studying grammar through songs were very enthusiastic and at ease taking part in class activities. This is entirely in line with Dobson's assertion (2005) that singing is a pastime cherished by all cultures. Both teachers and students enjoy singing because it is intimately tied to music and because it is a universal language. Due to the relaxed and comfortable mentality of both teachers and students, who forget about the stresses, inhibitions, and anxiety that frequently arise from crowded and cramped English classes (45 students per class), this will help to create favorable conditions for achieving the teaching and learning goal.

Based on the observation results, learning English through songs also improved the effectiveness of grammar instruction because songs stimulated active participation from students. Students could sing the English verses out loud and ask queries regarding the songs. Songs became a useful tool for teaching grammar because, in addition to their entertainment value, they helped students overcome barriers to learning a foreign language including shyness and speaking fear. Students in the study were overly enthralled with intriguing class activities. This not only

inspired students to be enthusiastic about learning grammar but also stimulated them to actively participate in class.

It can be also concluded from the author's observation that songs offered a great approach to rehearsing and repeating things without getting bored, which was in line with what Fagerland (2006) mentioned. Students learned more and gained comfort with the target language because of this repetition. Besides, from the author's experiences while doing the study, learning grammar through songs also helped teachers control the lesson and learners better. Due to the large class model (45 students/class), private talk and work often occurred. When teaching grammar by songs, the teacher could ask the learners to sing the song in unison if the learners were out of order or not focused on the lesson. However, the teacher had to take into account the needs, interests, and proficiency of the students to select songs that had an impact on learners' learning and so achieved the best teaching objectives. According to Philips (1993), young learners like to learn through singing activities while adults are particularly interested in pop songs, meaning that each learner will have different musical passions and interests.

In short, teaching English grammar via songs is completely suitable for young learners who will feel at ease and self-assured while learning with music. With English songs appropriate for learners' interests, levels, and teaching goals, teachers can design exercises or activities that can be applied at any stage of the lessons to teach not only English grammar but also 4 skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and other language-related abilities like vocabulary and pronunciation effectively.

## 5. CONCLUSION

From the results obtained from the application of two different methods of teaching grammar in two different groups of learners, it can be seen that teaching grammar

through English songs is an effective method that brings many benefits because this method does not only help learners memorize grammar rules better, but also has the effect of making learners relax comfortably, and forget about common obstacles of foreign language lessons. Since then, this method encourages learners' active participation in class time. In addition, this method also helps the teacher control the class more effectively. However, for the lesson to learn grammar through English songs to achieve the best results, it is necessary to consider carefully the musical interests, level of learners, and the teaching goal to have the most appropriate way to design lyric-based exercises or activities that can be applied at any stage of the lessons to teach not only English grammar but also other skills and language abilities effectively.

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