

USING SONGS IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR THE YOUNG LEARNERS

ANDI ASRIFAN

Abstract

Teaching English to Young Learners has become a trend nowadays. In every school, English is taught as one of the main subjects. In teaching young learners is not like teaching adults, children have their own way of learning. Since children like to play and have fun, the learning and teaching process should be suited with the nature of the children themselves. One of the forms of fun activities for children is through music, and songs are the common form of music that children know. Through this paper, the writer wants to show that through songs, children could enhance their language skills, such as speaking, listening and writing. Keywords: young learners, music, songs, speaking, listening and writing.

Introduction

Since English has become an international language, more and more people learn English. The importance of English as a world language has made people to learn English as early as possible. In Indonesia for example, English is taught even before the children enter the playgroup, there is a special class for children who are still around two or three years old. This is supported by the fact that the optimum age for children to learn a foreign language is when they are still in a very young age. This phenomenon has made Teaching English to Young Learners “TEYL” become increasingly famous. There are many English courses and the publication of the course books. Before we go on, it is better to look at the definition of young learners in order for us to have the same perspective and knowledge. The definition of Young Learners is children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old (Rixon,

1999), while according to Lynne Cameron; young learners are those under 14 years old. Moreover, the definition of young learners is mainly based on the years spent in the primary or elementary stages of formal education before the transition to secondary school. This is why the ages of the young learners could be varied from one country to the others. Some psycholinguists say that one of the factors to be successful in language learning is young age. There are some explanations for better learning at young age. First, the brain is more adaptable before puberty than after, and that acquisition of languages is possible without self-consciousness at an early age and also because young children have more opportunities than adults. The children are learning all the time without having the worries and responsibility of adults (Brumfit, 1994). “Children learn through play” is a sentence that has guided early childhood educators for decades. The nature of children is that they like to play and have fun than studying. Isenberg also stated that play is a need of every child and it is an important childhood activity that helps children master all developmental needs (1993). Play is the work of childhood and is important for learning and development. One of the forms of play that children are familiar is music, in the form of songs.

Listening activities through songs

The singing games and chants are the embodiment of symbolic play and imitation. These activities help the children to move from sensor motor experience to a symbolic transformation of it (Isenberg, 1993). Music helps children develop cognitive skills, as well as enhances language skills, by singing song; children learn language appreciation, vocabulary and rhyme (Shipley, 1998). Another thing is that

songs and rhymes are learned by heart, and this may form part of a child's linguistic. Thus, through this paper, the writer wants to explain how teachers can use songs to enhance skills to young learners, such as listening, speaking and writing skills.

When the songs are introduced; the first skill that the children learn is listening. This section will focus on activities which will practice the skills of listening. The activities include detailed listening comprehension, listening for summarizing or writing, listening to isolated vocabulary and listening for word order (Griffiee,1992).

A. The first activity is listening comprehension;

Before being introduced to the songs, the children are given several questions, for example, "Is this song going to be happy or sad?" "Who do you think is the singer, a girl or a boy?" and "Do you think you will like the song?" After answering the questions, the teachers play the song, and followed by other questions. The teacher might ask these questions: "How do you feel when you listen to the songs?" "What words do you remember?" "Do you like this song?" "Why or why not?"

B. The second activity is by providing the children a paraphrased version of the song before they listen it;

This activity is especially good to introduce songs that tell stories because it gives children the story line before they listen to the actual song. The activity goes like this; the teachers read the paraphrased version of the song to the children. This is an example from the song Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. Rudolph was a reindeer who lived in the north land where there is a lot of snow and ice. He was

normal or usual-looking except for his nose. He was the only reindeer with a red nose. But the other reindeer did not like Rudolph because his nose made him look different. They laughed at him. Also they would not let him play games with them. Then one December night something unusual happened. It was very foggy and Santa Claus could not see. When Santa and his regular reindeer flew into the sky they become lost because they could not see any lights, roads and landmarks. So Santa went to Rudolph and asked him to help him. Santa asked Rudolph to be the lead reindeer. In other words, Rudolph would be in the front and the light from his nose would give enough light for Santa and the other reindeer to see. In that way, they would be able to fly to give presents to girls and boys around the world. After Santa and the reindeer returned to Rudolph's home town, Rudolph was a hero. All the other reindeer were very proud of him and said that everybody in the world would always remember him. After the children listen to the paraphrase, they listen to the song.

- C. The third activity is listening to isolated vocabularies;

The teachers give the children worksheet which is indicated by vocabularies. In this case, they should find out the meaning and synonym of words after listened.
(See the worksheet)

- D. The fourth activity is listening to word order;

The song that can be used are *Dan Bird "Boulevard"*; *my heart will go on "Celino Dion"*; *the day you went away "M2M"*. The teacher prepares a hand-out where all the words are from the songs and instructs the students to comprehend song and easily to answer worksheet given.

These are some of the example of using songs to teach the children listening skills. Through the songs the children can enhance their listening skills.

Sing a song to learn fun

The second skill that the children can learn through songs is speaking skills. Singing a song, however simple, is a pleasing achievement. After the children listen to the song, they would attempt to sing it. Moreover, since the words in the refrain are repeated several times, they are easily memorized. As Rixon (2000) says that one of the most popular formats for songs is that the refrain (a rhythmic section) is repeated many times, and has often been observed to result in spontaneous 'joining in' by the young audience. Teacher of young learners of a language experienced that this exposure to rhythmic utterances benefits retention of words in memory. Griffiee (1992) also states that the children practice saying the words in the same way they sing the songs, the children can repeat the words in rhythmic word groups. Thus, the exposure and the repeated words from the songs make it easier for the children to remember the words as a result the children can produce or utter the words.

Several activities that can be used to enhance the children speaking skills, for example mini musicals and retell about what the song tell about. A mini musical is a performance that has some sort of theme, and contains some singing and some spoken dialogue. Songs can be grouped and be performed for the class. The teacher selects a theme for the musical, three to five songs. The songs need to be sing able, but the teacher can use only part of the songs, for example, one or two verses of the whole song. The teacher can also consider the children's songs, folk songs, or other

reality songs. The teachers then write all the spoken dialogues to introduce and connect the story line, and ask the children to perform in front of the class. Another activity is rhyme after rhyme. This activity practices rhyme and gives the children a chance to make up rhymes of their own. The teachers help the children by writing down several vocabulary items to match with the rhyme. The teachers give students every other line and ask them to fill in the missing lines. The teachers then ask the children to read their new lyrics. Finally, the children listen to the original lyrics to compare, for example:

We will not go down (song for Gaza) composed by Michael Heart

A blinding flash of white light
Lit up the sky over Gaza tonight
People running for cover
Not knowing whether they're dead or alive
 They came with their tanks and their planes
 With ravaging fiery flames
 And nothing remains
 Just a voice rising up and smoky haze
We will not go down
In the night, without a fight
You can burn up our mosques and our homes and our schools
But our spirit will never die
We will not go down
In Gaza tonight
 Women and children alike
 Murdered and massacred night after night
 While the so-called leaders of countries afar
 Debated on who's wrong or right
But the powerless words were in vain
And he bombs fell down like acid rain
But through the tear and the blood and the pain
You can still hear that voice through the smoky haze
 We will not go down
 In the night, without a fight
 You can burn up our mosques and our homes and our schools
 But our spirit will never die
 We will not go down
 In Gaza tonight

After the children learn to listen and speak the words, it is now the time for the children to learn to write. Apart from writing down the lyrics there are many ways to exploit songs for writing practice. According to Griffiee (1992), songs that tell a story do not quite often suggest a narrative that can be written down, and many pieces of music without words convey dramatic narrative to the imagination.

Brave to write everything listened in songs

There are several activities that suggest various way of getting the children to write, inspired by songs and music. The first activity that can be used to enhance the children writing skills is dictation. Dictation is a good way to introduce a song, especially for singing. After listening to the song many times, children will have not only the words but also the melody. The children are given short and slow songs, and then the teachers ask the children to write down the lyrics. The teachers play the tape until most of the children can complete the lyrics of the songs. The other way, the students are given some question to discuss about the song (*See the worksheet*)

Conclusion

Since the nature of the children like to play and have fun, it is possible for the teachers to teach the young learners through the fun activity. One form of fun activities that the children know and familiar is music, and the simple form of music is song.

Through songs and the fun activity make the children learn the language unconsciously, and in a fun way. Through songs, the children can enhance their language skills such as listening, speaking and writing. These three skills are put in order, since the first skills that the children learn is listening the songs, and after that

the children learn to speak or sing the song, the last thing, the children learn to write the lyrics of the songs. The activity is not only lead to the fun activity of the children but also the skills' development of the students.

References

- Brumfit,C., J. Moon, and R. Tongue 1994. **Teaching English to children**. London: Longman.
- Griffee, Dale T. 1992. **Songs in action**. UK: Prentice Hall.
- Isenberg, Joan P, and Jalongo, Mary Renck. (1993). **Creative expression and play in the early childhood curriculum**. United States of America: Macmillan Publishing.
- L Cooper. Fiona. 2007. **How to teach English to young children**. Formación en Educación Inicial San Andrés (FEISA) Casilla 1124, Asunción, Paraguay
- Mahoney. Judy. 1997. **Teach me more English**. Teach me tape inc. www.teachmetapes.com. 800 – 456 – 4656. Printed in the United states of America.
- Rixon, Shelagh.1999. **Young learners of English: some research perspectives**. London: Longman.
- Shiple, Dale. 1998. **Empowering children. Second Edition**. Canada: International Thomson Publishing.

DAN BIRD "BOULEVARD"

I don't **now/ know** why you said goodbye
Just let me know you didn't go forever my 1) _____
Please tell me why, you 2) _____ me cry
I **beg** you please all my money
If that what's you want me too

Know haven't you that it would go so far
Why you **love/ laugh** me you let boulevard
Come again you would **realize/ release** me pain
And we could be lover again

Just one more **change/ chance** another dance
And let me fell/ feel it isn't **real** that I've been loosing you
This should will arrive within your eyes/ ice
Come back to me and we will be **happy** together

May be 3) _____ I'll **make** you stay
A little while just for a smile and 4) _____ together
For I will show, a place I know
In 5) _____ were we could be **happy** forever

1. Listen to the song and choose the correct words in bold and Fill in the blank spaces.
2. Can you explain the words below from the context of the song (beg, real, happy, make)
3. Who is the woman in the song?
4. Does he get happy?
5. What is the man's attitude towards the woman?
6. Explain in a few words what the song is about?

Conversation topic:

Some people say it is bad to give to beggars. Do you agree? Give reasons for your opinion.

"MY HEART WILL GO ON" BY: Celino Dion

Every **night/ knight** in my dreams
I see you, I **fell/ feel** you,
That is how I 1) _____ you go on
Far across the distance
And spaces between us
You have come to 2) _____ you go on
Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you **open/ oven** the door
And you're here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on
Love can 3) _____ us one time
And last for a lifetime
And never let go till we're one
4) _____ was when I loved you
One **through/ true** time I hold to
In my life we'll always go on
Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you **open/ oven** the door
And you're here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on
You're here, there's nothing I fear,
And I know that my heart will go on
We'll stay forever this way
You are 5) _____ in my heart
And my heart will go on and on

Listening Activity:

Listen to the song and underline the correct words in bold, as you listen; also fill in the missing words into the blank spaces.

Vocabulary:

What do the words listed in the side box mean and find their synonyms?

Discussion:

What is the relationship between them, give any reasons?
Explain in a few words, what does the song talk about?

THE DAY YOU WENT AWAY BY: M2M

VERSE 1

Well I 1) _____ could it be
When I was dreaming 'bout you baby
You were dreaming of me
Call me 2) _____ , call me blind
To still be suffering is stupid after all of this time

PRE-CHORUS 1

Did I **loose/ lose** my love to someone better
And does she love you like I do
I do, you know I really really do

CHORUS

Well hey
So much I need to say/ said
Been lonely since the day
The day you want/ went away
So sad but true
For me there's only you
Been crying since the day
The day you went away

VERSE 2

I remember **day/ date** and time
September twenty second
Sunday twenty **fifth/ five** after nine
In the doorway with your case
No longer shouting at each other
There were tears on our faces

PRE-CHORUS 2

And we were letting go of something 3) _____
Something we'll never have again
I know, I **guest/ guess** I really really know

CHORUS

The day you went away
The day you went away

PRE-CHORUS 1

CHORUS

BRIDGE

Why do we never know what we've got 'til it's gone
How could I 4) _____ on
The day you went away
Cause I've been missing you so much I have to say
Been crying since the day
The day you went away

The day you went away
The day you went away

Discussion:

What events can make lovers unhappy?
How do you resolve misunderstandings in relationships?
How can time be unkind?
In what ways can people undo hurts caused in love relationships?
What events lead to mistrust in love relationships?

Listening:

Listen to the song and fill in the missing words.
Choose the correct words from the words in bold.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Alhamdulillah Rabbil Alamin, without the blessing of the almighty Allah SWT, the writer would have never been able to begin and finish writing this assignment. The writer realizes that this paper could have never been completed without the assistance of a number of people. Therefore, the researcher would very much like to acknowledge them.

His deepest gratitude is due to his lecturer Prof. H. M. Asfah Rahman, M.Ed.,Ph.D, who patiently and give many contributing how to teach literature in English language teaching.

His endless gratitude goes to the headmaster of SMA Negeri 5 Unggulan Parepare, where the writer has taught of English for the 1st grade right now.

His endless thanks go to all my classmates in for their idea, motivation, and helping any references about this assignment.

His loveliest appreciation goes to his beloved father Drs. A.S. Rifai, S.Pd, his mother Nasirah, his sister Andi Putri Nurhidayani, and all his relatives who always expect for the best of his and pray all the time for his success.

May the Almighty Allah SWT bless us now and forever.

Parepare, April 17th, 2009

ANDI ASRIFAN
08501064