

USING SONGS AND MUSICS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract: Listening is the most critical aspect of language acquisition, without which one cannot comprehend spoken language, nor can they produce any spoken language. However, EFL learners and teachers find listening is difficult to learn and to teach. Teachers can play a critical role in helping students overcome these challenges by providing opportunities for students to practice active listening, engaging them in discussions that are relevant to their interests and backgrounds, and using a variety of teaching methods, media, and resources to enhance their listening skills, one of which is using songs. Listening to English songs and music can be effective ways to improve students' listening skills. Songs can provide a fun and engaging way for students to practice their listening comprehension as well as help them become more familiar with the language and its pronunciation. Furthermore, music can help motivate students to expand their vocabulary and pronunciation skills..

Keywords: listening, song, music, students' listening skills

Abstrak: Mendengar/menyimak adalah aspek yang paling penting dalam pemerolehan bahasa, yang tanpanya seseorang tidak dapat memahami bahasa lisan, juga tidak dapat menghasilkan bahasa lisan. Namun, pembelajar dan guru EFL menganggap mendengarkan itu sulit untuk dipelajari dan diajarkan. Guru dapat memainkan peran penting dalam membantu siswa mengatasi tantangan-tantangan ini dengan memberikan kesempatan kepada siswa untuk berlatih mendengarkan secara aktif, melibatkan mereka dalam diskusi yang relevan dengan minat dan latar belakang mereka, dan menggunakan berbagai metode pengajaran, media, dan sumber daya untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka. keterampilan mendengarkan, salah satunya menggunakan lagu. Mendengarkan lagu dan musik berbahasa Inggris dapat menjadi cara efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa. Lagu dapat memberikan cara yang menyenangkan dan menarik bagi siswa untuk melatih pemahaman mendengarkan mereka serta membantu mereka menjadi lebih akrab dengan bahasa dan pengucapannya. Selain itu, musik dapat membantu memotivasi siswa untuk memperluas kosa kata dan keterampilan pengucapan mereka

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have no debate over the importance of listening in language acquisition. It has been acknowledged as the first requirement for first language acquisition, without which one cannot master any spoken language. As Feyten (1991) states that listening provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. In other word, listening is the door to speaking, by which one can build communication with others.

In building good communication with others, one has to get to the messages conveyed by their partners when they have a conversation, and this can be achieved through listening. Hence, listening bridges successful communication. One's success in listening may be measured from how much he or she can comprehend the meaning of what is being said or get the information that is delivered accurately.

In spite of the importance of listening, however, EFL learners find problems comprehending English spoken text (Hardiyanto, Tanjung, & Suharjono, 2021; Alzamil, 2021; Nushi & Orouji, 2020). Moreover, teachers also find that teaching listening the most complex and problematic (Walker, 2014; Johnson & Larsen, 2012;

Alrawashdeh & Al-Zayed, 2017). Teachers have attempted to vary their approaches, methods and techniques for teaching listening, yet they find that none has been the best for overall teaching of listening. Teachers must consider the individual differences of their students and vary their approaches, methods, and techniques in order to meet the students' adjustability.

Of the approaches teachers believe to be the most effective to teaching listening is bottom-up approach (Li & Renandya, 2012), prioritizing the development of students' lower skills such as coping with fast speed and spoken word recognition. One of learning activities that involve word recognition is listening to English songs, where students try to recognize spoken words recited by the singers in the songs. Although the words are not pronounced exactly similar to the way they are pronounced in natural speech, they may represent the actual spoken forms of the English words since some songs such rap songs feature fast speed representing more or less the natural spoken forms (Schoepp, 2001).

Therefore, the purpose of writing this scientific paper, entitled "Using Songs and Music to Improve Students' Listening Skills in Senior High School" is to explore and describe the use of songs and music in teaching listening as a means of improving students' listening skills. The paper aims to

investigate the effectiveness of using songs and music as a tool for language learning and to identify the potential benefits and challenges of this approach. Through this exploration, the paper seeks to provide insights and recommendations for educators and language learners who are interested in incorporating songs and music into their listening practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the keys to improving listening skills is to get used to listening to the language. Teachers need to motivate the students in the listening and learning process. Motivation is important in learning to listen because students may need to hear a quick sound or phrase several times before understanding it. Nunan (1999:232) stated that motivation is a key consideration in determining the preparedness of learners to communicate.

Teachers can use activities such as listening to media reports and listening to English songs to encourage students to improve their vocabulary and pronunciation which will eventually improve their listening skills. Songs have long been used in teaching English for students' vocabulary enrichment as well as pronunciation because it is considered both effective and fun (e.g. Mobbs & Cuyul,

2018; Sevik, 2012; Guler & Bozkurt, 2021). Utilizing songs in class environment amuses students, helps them feel relaxed and get rid of their negative attitudes towards a foreign language while learning a lingual structure through a song (Saricoban, 1999).

Indirectly, when the students listen to foreign songs and music, they are being trained in listening. By constantly listening to foreign songs, over time, they will be familiar with the language spoken in the song. After the students used it, they will begin to look for know the meaning of the song that we listen to them. Sheppard (2007:83) adds that one of the most important language skills that we have is the ability to translate the meaning of a word by how it sounded. Also, by using songs and music, it can improve students' listening skills.

Numerous studies have proven that songs and music have a number of positive effects on the human brain and body. Listening provides the foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it plays a life-long role in the process of communication. Wilt (1990) reported that people listen 45 percent of the time they spend communicating. He also found that 30 percent of communication time was spent speaking, 16 percent speaking reading, and 9 percent writing. That finding confirmed what Rankin

discovered in 1928, that people spent 70 percent of their waking time communicating and those three-fourths of this time was spent listening and speaking.

Maess, Koelsch, Gunter, & Friederici (2001) did neurological research aimed to investigate the neural processing of music perception and cognition. The study specifically focused on the neural correlates of the processing of harmonic relationships and the influence of musical expertise on such processing. The subject for the research are 12 musicians and 12 non-musicians who listened to pairs of chords that either had a strong consonant or a weak dissonant. The result of the study showed that both subject exhibited similar neural responses to consonant and dissonant chords, with differences observed only in the timing and location of the responses. However, musicians showed enhanced neural activity in response to consonant chords in the left hemisphere of the brain, which is known to be involved in language processing. The study by Maess et al. Provides valuable insights into the neural mechanisms underlying music perception and cognition of musical expertise on such processing. The findings show that implications for the role of music in language development. Musical and lingual process occur in the same section of brain and that there are significant similarities between musical and lingual

syntax. When listening to music, left and right brains are active simultaneously, and the activeness of both brains can maximize the learning process and improve memory.

A scientific study conducted by Medina (2002) explored the use of music to enhance second language acquisition. The study was based on a review of existing literature on the topic and provided insights into the theoretical underpinnings of using music in language learning, as well as practical applications for teachers and language learners. The study found that music can help second language learners acquire vocabulary and grammar, improve spelling, and develop linguistic skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The study also provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of using music to enhance second language acquisition. The findings suggest that incorporating music into language learning can be an effective and enjoyable way to support language learners in developing their linguistic skills.

METHOD

This study is a literature review where the writer explores the available sources and collect the data from researchers' works published in journals or uploaded to the internet. The works are reviewed, reduced and taken to meet the data required

in this paper and to achieve the purpose of this writing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of songs and music in the process of teaching listening in the classroom basically undergoes two stages: the selection of songs and the implementation of songs to teach listening.

During the stage of song selection, students are strongly motivated to learn the lyrics of a new pop song or and old favorite they have heard and never understood before. This will build students curiosity to get new words and the meaning of the song. Therefore, the teacher needs to give special concern with songs selection for listening activities in the class. Three suggestion by Lems (1996) and Poppleton (2001) could be taken into consideration for song selection:

1. Song lyrics should be clear and loud, not submerged in the instrumental music.
2. The vocabulary load for the song should be appropriate to the proficiency level. For example, Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" (1971) – with its vivid imagery and possibilities for multiple interpretations- might be successful with an advanced level class. With

other learners, however, its fast pace, obscure references, and lack of repetition could prove troublesome, as could the word inversion in lines such as, "There walks a lady we all know."

3. Songs should be pre-screened for potentially problematic content, such as explicit language, references to violent acts or inappropriate religious allusions (Lems, 2001).

In addition, Lynch (2008:21) also identifies three primary song selection criteria, which are as follows: a) When possible, use songs that seem to be popular among the students. b). Lyrics have to be clear and easy to understand. Song lyrics could have a variation of textual meanings. Listeners generally have different interpretations of the song's meaning (Tampenawas, Ollii & Posumah, 2020:2). c). Songs should get a relevant theme. It doesn't contain negative-themed songs.

It is recognized that when teaching students, the teacher must also select songs and music with a suitable level of challenge. The song's suitability is a critical consideration. It should be determined whether or not the students will enjoy the song.

The right selection of the songs to be used in teaching listening will help the teachers keep the class active. The students hopefully can join the listening tasks in the

class well. The most commonly applied procedure in listening task is ‘fill in the blank’ activity. Whitaker (1994) has a three-step process for this activity that she has found successful: (1) Students hear the entire song twice; (2) the song is played a third time with a pause after each line to give the students time to write; and (3) the song is played a final time in its entirety to allow students to check what they have written (Purcell, 1992).

In using songs and music as media in teaching-listening process, teachers should play the song more frequently. It is necessary with “listen-repeat” activities. Scoot and Ytreberg (1990:27) stated that listen and repeat exercises are great fun and give the pupils the chance to get a feel for the language; the sounds, the stress and rhythm and the intonation. This type of activity also helps to establish the link between words and meaning.

According to Yoo (2002:29), the song activity procedure can be fulfilled in the following steps:

- a) Pre-listening
 1. As a warm-up or schema-building activity, ask students what they know about American pop culture.
 2. Share the close activity handout to students, and have them read the lyrics and use their grammar

knowledge to figure out what the missing words might be. The idea of knowing the purpose of listening is a very effective first strategy to teach because it helps students organize and reflect on their learning (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990).

- b) While-listening
The students are told to listen for the missing words. After playing the song once, ask students if they want to hear it once more. If they do, play it again.
- c) Post-listening
Discuss the answer with the class after the while listening process is done. Replay the sections where the students had difficulty understanding the words if necessary. Brown (2006) states that this sort of task is important because it allows teachers to isolate students’ responses and thereby gauge the process the students are making on listening skills. Teachers can use post-listening activities to check comprehension, evaluate listening skills and use of listening strategies, and extend the knowledge gained to other contexts.

Aside of that, the learning process could consists of gap fills or close texts, true false statements, and dictation.

CONCLUSION

Using songs to teach listening has to undergo the stages of song selection and songs implementation. The right selection of the songs is beneficial for keeping the

students involved in the listening activity and increases the adjustability to the students level of mastery while the right implementation may increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the listening instruction.

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