

"INTEGRATION OF PRAGMALINGUISTICS, FUNCTIONAL TRANSLATION STUDIES AND LANGUAGE TEACHING PROCESSES"

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December 18-19, 2021

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Teaching foreign languages to young learners through songs

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Abstract: *Most children enjoy singing songs and songs, as pedagogical tools, play a pivotal role in improving their listening and pronunciation skills, as well as learning of vocabulary, sentence structures and speech patterns. And this article deals with the advantages of using songs in teaching foreign languages and in improving young learners' language skills.*

Key Words: *songs, young learners, language skills, pronunciation, stages, learning styles, motivation, fun, teaching, pedagogical tool, visual, auditory, kina esthetic and tactile learners.*

The main goal of teaching young learners is to encourage children to use the target language in their life. It means developing their communicative skills, competency and culture, therefore at the lessons of foreign languages teachers should use some strategies which encourage pupils to be active participants of the lessons, to develop their communicative skills, to form their interest and motivation to study the language.

Teaching English with songs is a brilliant idea because music is a global language. Songs are a very effective means of learning English, as well as they are useful pedagogical tools in teaching young learners who are between 5-9 years old. Songs tend to be repetitive and have a strong rhythm. They help learners memorize the vocabulary or structures very easily although they do not know how to read or write. Melody, rhythm and harmony go far beyond linguistic obstacles and can be accepted by any individual.

Songs are easily learnt by primary children and quickly become favorites because of their familiarity. At primary level, vocabulary teaching tends to concentrate on single word items, and songs allow learners to learn 'chunks' or meaningful phrases of the language rather than single words, as well as to learn about how sounds connect and run together. They allow language to be reinforced in a natural context, both with structures and vocabulary.

All songs build confidence in young learners and even shy children will enjoy singing or acting out a song as part of a group or whole class. This also develops a sense of class identity. Many songs can help develop memory and concentration, as well as physical coordination, for example when singing doing the actions for a song. For the teacher, songs can be a wonderful starting point for a topic and can fit in well with topics, skills, language and cross-curricular work.

We know that young learners are energetic; most of them are kina esthetic and tactile and that is why they like to move and act out by singing the song, in addition, teaching through songs will be more interesting and effective because the learners will not just repeat the new words, they will memorize them in a new and creative way. Kina esthetic and tactile learners can benefit from actions added to the songs; work with the melody, rhythm and lyrics to provide actions that will help these learners absorb knowledge in a way that makes the most sense to them. Auditory learners easily learn from songs - the rhythm and phrasing provide the perfect vehicle for teaching vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as delivering the words in context. Visual learners can be aided by story pictures or vocabulary flashcards relating to the song, as well as by watching the other learners and joining in on the actions that match the different words.

Songs are not just time-filling activities, but have a great educational value and can be used in the classroom to make learners use the language instead of just thinking about learning the correct forms.

Songs are used for three purposes:

- to warm up the class at the beginning of the lesson (“Good morning”, “Hello”)
- to practice language or a structure which is being studied in the lesson
- to recycle the learnt material

Some songs lend themselves naturally to teaching or reinforcing grammar points. They may be integrated into lessons with a particular grammar focus and provide much-needed variety, while contributing to the overall aim of a lesson. Particularly at lower levels when children are still learning basic key grammar patterns, songs can play a role as input, because when learners sing they do the action. This combination of singing and doing actions really helps stimulate the memory of the child.

Research into child language acquisition has shown that lexical items may need to be repeated many times before the child internalizes them. Songs provide an excellent means of repeating and reinforcing vocabulary and are suitable for children of all abilities. Young learners may accomplish a great number of achievements through the songs in foreign language, including following aspects:

- analyzing the rhythm, pitch contour and imitate the native speakers
- learning new words through the songs
- learning grammar and examine the tenses used in the songs
- learning speaking.

According to methodologists, songs have a place in the classroom for helping create that friendly and co-operative atmosphere, and it is obvious that children not only improve their language skills, but also their cultural views. While listening, the pupil improves his both listening and speaking skills as what he hears is stuck in his mind and he automatically gets used to language. Not only this, songs are beneficial for physical development of children as they move, dance, clap and jump. All these movements strengthen the memory, which enables the young learners to listen to patterns of the language as they sing and use the song several times. Therefore, the role of songs is great in improving young learners’ language skills, as they help to:

- enrich pupils’ vocabulary;
- improve their listening, thinking and speaking skills;
- open their unknown features (talent);
- create an unusual and friendly atmosphere in the class;
- revise the new words by singing.

However, there are some disadvantages in the process of using songs:

- sometimes pupils cannot catch the main meaning of the song;
- it takes a lot of time and teachers won’t be able to do everything that they planned beforehand;
- sometimes there can be a productive noise.



Anyway, we consider that songs are the best and most beneficial ways of teaching English to young learners, as it is an easy way to attract their attention, in addition with songs children can get more interested in learning English.

In conclusion, we can say that songs are fun and motivating, because pupils enjoy singing along and it can really improve not only their motivation, but also the pronunciation and intonation patterns.

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