

Language Learning with Copacabana

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ABSTRACT

Songs and music in the classroom are known to be attractive and a valuable teaching tool in language learning. They can be utilized to help students improve on the various skills of the language. They also enhance students' motivation and interest in language learning. Numerous studies have been carried out in using songs for school students to improve on a specific language skill such as vocabulary skills and grammar. However, a song can be utilized to help students practice many different skills in language learning. Thus, an action research in the classroom at the tertiary level was developed to allow students practice on the various language skills through a song. The purpose of this study was to develop activities in the classroom that integrate the four major language skills through the use of a song. Using the song titled Copacabana by Barry Manilow, this study explored some possible ways in enhancing language learning in all the four major language skills basically writing, reading, listening and speaking. Through a survey that was carried out, this approach received positive feedbacks from the students. It was also observed that students were more responsive and attentive in class when using this approach. Thus, integrating songs into language learning serves not only as an effective teaching tool, but it also provides a positive learning experience for students.

Keywords: Songs, Language skills, Tertiary level

1.0 Introduction

As we are now venturing in the different educational approaches in this technology era, songs remain to be a valuable tool in language teaching and learning. Many researchers agree that using songs in the language classroom can help to motivate learners and make learning environment more interesting. Songs have been a valuable tool in language learning at different levels of students (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2017). However, songs have normally been used in the classroom to teach a certain language skill and few studies have been carried out to examine the effectiveness of a lesson in which one song is utilized and integrated into the learning of all the language skills in a classroom. Therefore, this study aims at developing activities that integrate the four major language skills through the use of a song in the classroom at the tertiary level.

2.0 Background of Study

This study is an action research in which activities are formulated in teaching English by using songs to adult learners at the tertiary level. This study was initiated to facilitate students' learning in the English language course which is a prerequisite for the students before they proceed to other semesters. In this higher institution, students are required to take the English language course in the first three semesters of their studies. This study was conducted with the first semester students as they have to undergo listening, reading, writing and speaking skills in the course. From the researcher's observation, many students find it challenging to overcome their lack of proficiency in the language and this affect their motivation level in learning. Therefore, songs are brought in as a tool to assist students in language learning and increase their motivation level in the classroom. Language activities are created using songs and the exercises help increase students' communicative and creative skills, thus assisting and improving students' motivation and performance in language learning.

3.0 Literature Review

Research has shown that using songs in a classroom brings many benefits to the students. First of all, songs serve as an effective tool in supporting students' understanding in learning a language, thus help them in improving their proficiency in the language (Ludke, 2016). In a study by Ainul Azmin Md Zamin, Nor Azrul Hardy Adzmi & Maslawati Mohamad (2020), students have shown improvement

in their vocabulary skills through the use of songs in the classroom as new words are found in the song lyrics. Using songs in the classroom can also bring in a more relaxing setting in learning English. Dolean (2015) has found that music and songs help to decrease student's anxiety level, thus provide the benefit of improving their wellbeing. Students also felt less apprehensive in the classroom and it is found that they tend to ask questions more in lessons with songs than in a normal lesson (Ainul Azmin Md Zamin, Nor Azrul Hardy Adzmi & Maslawati Mohamad, 2020)

Thus, songs are seen as a useful tool to use in the classroom. Teachers believed that students seemed to perform better in the classroom when learning takes place with the use of songs (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2017). According to Malekian (2016), songs are universal and easy to find, and it was found in his study that using songs in the classroom has helped to increase students' motivation in learning new words as they helped to create an interesting classroom environment.

4.0 Methodology

This study was carried out in a classroom of 25 students from a semester 1 Diploma level of the Faculty of Applied Science at a higher institution. The lesson took two hours to complete, in which a song was utilized to create exercises in reading, listening, writing and speaking. The song that was employed for this particular study is titled Copacabana by Barry Manilow which was released in 1978. It is an old song and it is purposely selected by the researcher as students are not familiar with the lyrics. The activities during the two-hour lesson were divided into two parts. In each part, the strategy of the lesson was explained, followed by a display of the task, students' output, language skills involved and the duration of the task. A summary of the activity is given in table 1.

Table 1: Module for Copacabana

NO	TASK	OUTPUT	LANGUAGE SKILLS	DURATION
PART 1 – THE FIRST HALF OF THE SONG IS PLAYED				
1	Listen to the song and try to understand what the song is about. Take note of the characters, and the place of the scene and the story.	Written notes	Listening	5 minutes
2	Answer the following questions about the song. 1. How many characters are there in the song? 2. Name the main characters? 3. Where does the scene take place? 4. What is the profession of the characters?	Verbal responses	Speaking / Listening	15 minutes
3	In groups, predict the ending of the story in the song. Discuss and write the ending of the story. OR Discuss and role play your prediction of the story.	Written paragraph/short essay Role play presentation	Reading and writing Speaking	40 minutes
PART 2 – THE SECOND PART OF THE SONG IS PLAYED				
4	Play the song and sing together. Listen to the actual ending of the song	Singing	Speaking	5 minutes
5	Students fill in a gap-filling exercise on grammar and vocabulary based on the lyrics of the song.	Grammar and vocabulary exercises	Writing	15 minutes
6	In groups, create a different style to singing the song (eg: rap) and present it.	Group presentation	Speaking	40 minutes

After the activities were carried out, a short and simple survey was given to the 25 students to find out their perceptions of the lesson. There were two parts to the survey in which part A comprised of the demographic profile which was made up

of 2 items while Part B consisted of 5 items of a five-point Likert scale (1- strongly agree (SA), 2- agree (A), 3- not sure (NS), 5- disagree (D), and 5- strongly disagree (SD)). The data were analyzed by using descriptive analysis.

5.0 Results

Using songs such as Copacabana in the English language classroom has brought in positive feedback from the students. The result of the survey is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' feedback

No	Question	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1	I like doing writing tasks by using a song in the classroom	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%
2	I like doing listening by using a song in the classroom	72%	24%	4%	0%	0%
3	I like doing reading comprehension exercises by using a song in the classroom.	72%	28%	0%	0%	0%
4	I like practicing on my speaking by using a song in the classroom.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
5	I like learning new words through songs	76%	34%	0%	0%	0%
6	I like doing grammar exercises based on a song played in the classroom	60%	32%	8%	0%	0%
7	I like learning English through songs	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%
8	Using a song helps me to relax in learning English	88%	12%	0%	0%	0%
9	I like the song Copacabana	56%	44%	0%	0%	0%

The result in Table 2 showed that 64% of the students strongly agreed that they liked working on their writing using songs and 80% of the students were keen on doing speaking activities through songs, while 72% of the students strongly agreed

that they enjoyed doing listening tasks and reading comprehension exercises by using songs in the classroom. The result also showed that 76% of the students enjoyed learning new words and 60% of the students liked working on grammar through songs. It was also shown that more than 80% of the students enjoyed learning English through songs as that helped them to relax in the classroom.

From the result, using songs in the classroom has brought in positive responses from the students. This study is in line with other studies which has shown that songs serve as a valuable tool in the classroom in assisting students to increase their proficiency, interest and motivation in the English language (Ainul Azmin Md Zamin & Nor Azrul Hardy Adzmi & Maslawati Mohamad, 2020; Romero, 2017; Dolean, 2016; Ludke, 2016;). In addition, introducing songs from the past to the younger generation provides a different outlook and new appreciation towards music.

6.0 Conclusion

This study has provided input on how a song can be used in an English language classroom at the tertiary level to teach the four major language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is shown that songs work as a powerful tool in language learning and one song can be used in learning numerous language skills. Having songs as a teaching aid to learning English can help students to increase their proficiency and motivation levels. It provides a path to students in learning new words and gaining understanding in the language. Therefore, it is recommended that more songs from the past are selected as teaching tools in language learning. Further research can be carried out on the effectiveness of using songs in language learning particularly on the cognitive and affective levels of students at the tertiary level.

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