

Using Songs in a Language Classroom

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Skill-focus: LSRW

Level: Adult learners

Estimated time: 60 minutes for the essential activities

Group size: 3 members per group

Objective:

To develop learners' overall language competency, particularly their listening skills by engaging them innovatively through songs and creatively incorporating the use of ICT.

Material:

An MP3 file/video of the song the teachers and learners wish to use (depending upon its usefulness for language enhancement) and a hard copy/printout of the lyrics. For instance, here we are taking the song "Quit playing Games with my heart" (1996) from an album by the boy band Backstreet Boys. A word of caution: Avoid songs that are too long/fast moving/obscure.

Procedure: The steps are given in the table below. While steps 1-4 may be considered essential, the teacher may choose to focus on any 2-3 options from steps 5-11 depending on the specific language needs of her learners.

S. No	<i>Linguistic purpose</i>	<i>Nature of Engagement</i>	<i>Possible Activities</i>
1.	Eliciting responses based on students' previous knowledge/experience.	Ask questions regarding themes in the song such as relationships, love, deceit etc.	Prepare and share a sheet with a wide range of possible answers/interpretations to initiate a discussion.
2.	Developing listening competence by listening to the song. Duration/audio length 3.53	Listen to an audio clip.	Practice joyful listening, simply let the learners enjoy the music. The students may be asked to write down 2-3 sentences about what resonated with them during this experience and share in the group.
3.	Developing listening competence. Ask students to listen to the song again, this time with lyrics (provide the printout of the lyrics to each group).	Learners read the lyrics while watching the video clip.	Learners discuss different aspects of the song: Lyrics, themes, presentation etc.
4.	Elaborating the meaning of the song.	Learners discuss key points and tempo of the song.	Collaboratively write your views of the song – the visual impact and the emotional appeal.
5.	Focussing on grammar.	Virtually every song centres on a particular verb tense, which one is it in the song?	Discuss and write down: 1. How many examples can you find of the past simple tense in the song? 2. Why did the writer of this song choose this verb tense?
6.	Focussing on vocabulary.	Find out new words/familiar words used differently. Can you think of more of such words?	Provide the following examples and ask students to construct sentences with each one of them. 1. Soul - figurative (emotional energy) ex: She puts a lot of soul into her art. 2. So bad - informal for badly (= very much) ex: My leg hurts "so bad".

			3. Tear us apart- figurative: devastate emotionally. E.g., You tear me apart. I love you with everything I have.
7.	Focussing on the rhyme scheme.	List the rhyming words.	Take any 2 sets of rhyming words and construct a short poem.
	Donning the writer's cap!	Focus on the rhyming scheme and the theme of the song. Compose a song.	Groups share their creativity in the class by singing the songs they have written.
9.	Interviewing a music band.	Imagine that two students are members of a music band and the third one is a reporter. Ask them to prepare interview questions and answers.	Encourage students to role play their interview in front of the class.
10.	Understanding points of view.	A song tends to give you the perspective of the singer. What is it?	Discuss and subsequently write a contrasting point of view in a paragraph.
11.	Reading and presenting!	Ask students to read about any music band they like. Ask them to come prepared with a short PPT in the next class.	Students present their PPTs. A general discussion may be initiated on the relevance of songs in our lives, the media hype over some music bands, famous controversies, etc.

Follow up activity:

For reinforcement, the teacher may send students short musical videos / interviews of famous singers and musicians and develop similar interactive tasks.

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