Songs as Teaching Resources in the Young Learners’ ESL Classroom

Gyða Hrund Þorvaldsdóttir
140982-5719

Kennarahásköli Íslands
Kennaradeild, Grunnnám
April 2008
Abstract

Many schools in Iceland have started to teach English in the first grade, but they may lack appropriate material to make the most of these lessons. The English lessons that take place at such a young age are usually in the hands of the class teacher. If the teacher has not received training or insight into language teaching he or she might not have enough training to get the most out of the lesson. The teacher might also lack material that is specially aimed at this age group. In this case we are talking about children five to eight years old so I decided to write these songs in hope that they might become useful for the youngest learners and valuable tools for their class teachers so they can bring variety to the class and make the learning process an experience that is fun for everyone. Moreover, important language components like listening, pronunciation and vocabulary can easily be introduced through the music.
1. Introduction

The school in which I did my field study had an extremely dedicated English teacher who only spoke the target language to the students, used many different approaches and made each class creative and fun.

However there was a girl in the 10th grade who came from another school that did not have as effective English lessons, who claimed that she never understood anything and gave up very quickly on everything, especially if we had listening exercises. The girl was a very good singer and was extremely interested in pop music so I decided to use that to her advantage. I took a pop song that the girls in the class were always singing and used that as a listening exercise. As a result, the girl completely transformed. She was excited to do the assignment and I’ve never seen her so busy. She was even asking for the meaning of the words in the lyrics before I explained them and tried her best to participate in the discussion about the meaning of the lyrics. This incident made me realize that there must be many teachers and students that have similar stories to tell. It also made me wonder how songs could be used to introduce the target language to the youngest learners. Important language components like listening, pronunciation and vocabulary can easily be introduced through music.

Pop songs are used a lot for the older students and for easily accessible material abounds. Lyrics are on the Internet and in many cases you can download the music as well. But pop songs might not be suitable for the youngest learners due to the content of the lyrics which are often more appealing to young adults. The vocabulary might also be too complicated. So my goal there is to make lyrics that are age appropriate and have a simple vocabulary but still have educational value. Assignments come with each song but they are merely suggestions as to how you can work with the songs. The possibilities are endless and the assignments can be designed to fit various ages and levels of ability.

I also studied material and experiences from teachers and specialists from all over the world who use or promote the use of songs in the classroom. As Kevin Schoepp (2001), a teacher in the Sabanci University in Istanbul states, first hand knowledge from teachers themselves is very valuable because they are the ones who are using the method and know how songs work in the classroom.
2. Theory

Schoepp (2001) states that to be able to understand the grounded theory on which teachers base their reasons for using songs in the classroom and find them valuable we have to understand the listening process that occurs when a song is used in the classroom. He states that teachers see patterns emerge from the material they use. These patterns include factors that are affective, linguistic and cognitive, which are the reasons they use songs in their classrooms. Cognitively, songs give the chance of developing automaticity and because it is authentic material it can be an aid to the development of linguistic components.

Stephen Krashen (1983), a well-known linguist and educational researcher, put forward the Affective Filter Hypothesis. In short, his theory imagines a blockage that students develop towards their study because of a negative attitude that is emotional or affective. Distress, lack of motivation and low self-esteem can increase this blockage, which prevents language input from taking place. Krashen explains that in order to get maximum results the filter must be weak.

In order to help students back on track and trigger their interest again you need some interesting resources, which is where songs become valuable tool. Students need to be interested in learning if they are to gain maximum results and learners of all ages enjoy music activities, which can not only be a relaxing and well-deserved break from the textbooks, but also work to weaken their affective filter.

According to Gordon (1993) there are many similarities between language and music development because both have the form of rhythm and tone, have communicative modes that are both transmitted orally and aurally, are socially entwined in our lives from an early age and contain syntactic, phonetic and semantic components. More experts support Gordon’s opinion such as Krouse (1988), who states that learners discover vocabulary, structure and other language components through active singing and the learners can transfer this to conversation situations. Krouse supports the idea of using music in the ESL classroom to increase creativity in the learning process.
3. The Young Learner

While the students are singing they feel as the pressure is off for a moment and they are free and happy. They are learning vocabulary, language structure and grammar points subconsciously and these points can be later used in speaking exercises and conversations (Krouse:1988).

Mercer and Mercer (2001) have defined five important characteristics of young learners and how they can be integrated into language teaching. It is important for the teacher to know these traits in order to teach a new language to young learners. These characteristics are:

• **Self-centeredness.** The student bases his experience on everything that involves him and his life. Using the family and friends is a good start.

• **Short attention span.** The activities have to be interesting and lively to keep the students occupied. Here songs are very useful to rotate between activities and break up the lesson.

• **Learning through senses.** The young learner uses his senses to familiarize himself with the new language. Touching, hearing and seeing are very important to him.

• **Natural curiosity.** Young students find it interesting to learn a new language and like repeating what the adults are saying even though they don’t understand it right away and cannot yet express themselves. They still try, which often results in spontaneous speaking. The younger the students are, the less shy they are about making mistakes.

• **Learning through play.** Young students like to play and therefore games are important because students can have fun while acquiring new language skills. Moreover, games and promote diversity in the curriculum.
Le Roux (2002) also supports the theory that ESL students can relax and feel good about themselves while singing because that is a form of an expression that they are familiar with. It can also appeal to students who already have negative attitude towards learning a new language or the traditional methods that are commonly used.

4. The Benefits of Music in the Classroom

Of course songs alone can’t teach someone a new language but they can be an aid to the development of the language. As Horn (2007) has noted:

Singing in the classroom is not intended to replace valuable speaking techniques. It is an additional and enjoyable way of presenting language imaginatively (p.53).

A variety of exercises can be used with song lyrics such as information gap activities, finding synonyms and antonyms, building vocabulary, writing a story on the topic of the song, answering questions orally and in writing about the topic of the lyrics, creating discussion, talking about slang and abbreviations, hearing correct pronunciation, and the list goes on.

Eken provides examples of how one can use songs in the ESL classroom:

- To present a topic, a language point, lexis, etc.
- To practice a language point, lexis, etc.
- To focus on common learner errors in a more direct way
- To encourage extensive and intensive listening
- To stimulate discussion of attitudes and feelings
- To encourage creativity and use of imagination
- To provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere
- To bring variety and fun to learning

Eken (1996:46)
Researchers in this field say that using songs in the ESL classroom can give a break from the regular classroom routine as well as develop the four skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking (Schoepp:2001).

This is supported by Birkenshaw-Fleming (1989) who states that most students manage to memorize information much quicker and easier when it is put to music. They mention as an example the alphabet, or as we know it the song about the ABC. What is also important is that songs in the second language can give good exposure to correct usage of grammar, especially on topics that may be confusing to explain such as collocations since lyrics are authentic language.

5. Language Components

Herbst (1988) states that music is extremely valuable for teaching new vocabulary or structures in the target language and Horn (2007) says that music can help with pronunciation, vocabulary enrichment and articulation.

Other theorist such as Bayless and Ramsey (1987) agree with Herbst and Horn. In terms of pronunciation, Brown (2006) points out that songs like *Twinkle Little Star* that have rhyme at the end of each line can make students realize that words that don’t look the same can still sound the same and are therefore homophones.

Example:

Twinkle, twinkle little *star,*
how I wonder what you *are.*
Up above the world *so high,*
like a diamond in the *sky.*
6. Repetition in Songs

Many studies show that repetition is highly effective for students to remember newly introduced vocabulary. When making the lyrics I made for this project I decided to use repetition after my research on the topic. Many prestigious people have examined the effect of repetition on children and also regarding to learning a new language.

For example the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget did numerous studies on children and how they function in the world around them and how that affected children’s mental development. Piaget saw children as active learners and it was through taking action to solve a problem or the task that lay before them that learning took place. So the most important thing Piaget points out is that the child is an active learner/thinker who works with ideas to gain knowledge. Children want to learn because they are looking for solutions and the environment, i.e. the teacher and the classroom being the environment, have the opportunity to come up with a solution (Cameron, Lynne: 2001). Piaget also described the egocentric language in which children talk. They don’t care if there is a receiver for this babble but they just like hearing themselves talk and repeat words (Piaget: 1923). What Piaget described there might explain why repetition in songs can be effective and enjoyable for the children while acquiring a new language.

To support this theory Murphey (1990) claims that for young children, songs seem to pave the way for language development and many studies seem to lead towards the conclusion that if the parents respond and repeat the infant’s cooing and babbling it can be an immense factor in the language development later in the child’s life.

Krashen (1983) talks about the automatic repetitions as an expression of Chomsky’s Language Acquisition Device or LAD where in short Chomsky states that our brain has the natural tendency to repeat what we hear around us so it can understand and process what is going on. Related to this matter, Krashen states that songs can in many cases help activate LAD.

Cabrera and Martinez (2001) did an experimental study on the effect of repetition on the performance of primary school children. The experiment took place in an ESL classroom with sixty Spanish-speaking students who were randomly divided into two groups and listened to a story that had two different versions.
The first version was simplified and to the second version they added 68 new utterances, 48 of which were repetitions and 20 were comprehension checks. They estimated that the second version had repetition of 22%. The results from their experiment showed that the students who listened to the story with the repetition performed significantly better on a comprehension test they took than the students who didn’t have the version with the repetition.

7. Music as an Enhancement to Listening Skills

Listening is the foundation of all human communication and Krouse (1988) points out that when first graders listen to English they are being exposed to sounds and pronunciation that they might never have heard before, for example the new language might have a different phonetic system than the students’ mother tongue and therefore need an active learning process to memorize those unfamiliar sounds. This requires that the students listen with an active mind and to rouse interest in the subject songs can be a useful material. Languages are normally learned by ear and the learner’s first exposure to structure and vocabulary of the new language is usually through listening. Like language, music is based on sounds and rhythm so that is why songs can enhance the students’ listening skills.

Extensive studies have been done on the field of listening and many theories have been put forward. For example active listening which is the process where students start to add feeling and understanding to their ability to listen and check for understanding. Active listening can also be called listen for understanding or listen for meaning. Body language is an important thing to pay attention to while listening for understanding (McDonough and Shaw:2003). Songs in the classroom are often based on body language or body movement, for example *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*. The students have to listen and understand in order to follow the song and know what body part to point at.

Cullen (1999) discusses two processes that are involved in listening which are put to use when singing a song in the ESL classroom. It is the activity that goes along with the song that tells us which process is being used. Cullen states that it is essential for developing listening comprehension to practice both of these processes. Those
processes are first the bottom-up processing and then the listener builds up the sounds into sentences, words and meaning. The other one is called top-down processing and that is where in order to understand the meaning of a message the listener uses his background knowledge.

Horn (2007) mentions that auditory discrimination is the ability to hear the difference between sounds and is very important when learning a new language. The students must be able to hear the phonetic difference and pronunciation in words of the target language. She also talks about the importance of music when it comes to L2 acquisition and developing listening skills, which are of course very important in language learning because so much of the learning takes place aurally.

8. Communicative Language Teaching

Music can be a vital factor in both fluency and accuracy work. Students can practice their pronunciation and vocabulary on words they are being exposed to for the first time and the teacher can also go over grammatical points that might be in the lyrics. As discussed above music can enhance the students’ listening skills and as Rost (1990) states that one of the most important skills that are used when working with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that the listening component is in order and the skill of listening is nurtured and he emphasizes that CLT has provided an important role for listening skills.

CLT has its main goal gaining communicative competence. In order to achieve that it is very important to work with all the components of the language. CLT embraces authentic material so the students will get as practical training as possible. Games, information gap, role-play and other activities are common in CLT and accuracy and fluency are key words (Larsen-Freeman:2000).
9. Total Physical Response

Cronje (1997) and Richard and Rodgers (1995) talk about the teaching method Total Physical Response (TPR) developed by Dr. James J. Asher.

TPR is a combination of speech and action and teaches the language through movement. At first you give the instruction through an act and physical movements and then later the speech is added in. This approach has been used for a long time in language teaching and especially with young learners because you teach the language at an introductory level with this approach (Richard and Rodgers, 1995). 

*Simon Says* is a good example of a game that promotes TPR and the method is also efficient for storytelling. TPR can also be used with songs and is mentioned in Appendix I how it can be connected with the lyrics in that section. TPR can be very effective when the students are being introduced to a new word that for example indicates movement and then the teacher can act out the word.

By using TPR Asher states that the learners gain their listening abilities because the approach requires that the student responds physically to the spoken language that the teacher gives (Asher:1981) and according to Horn (2007), based on her studies, CLT and TPR have provided a newly emphasized role for listening skills in language learning.
10. Conclusion

For young learners it can be a little intimidating learning a new language. Music is so enriched in the culture of every country so it can be something that the students know and can relate to. Music can appeal to their creative minds and students who are shy or might have learning problems can all relate to singing and is therefore a great way to get all the students involved. Music is also authentic material and by using authentic material you can relate to the students’ interests and also provide valuable insight in culture both in the present and the past and as I have established important language components like vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical points can easily be introduced through the song.

What intrigues me the most is what a great opportunity for listening exercise songs can be. Due to the authenticity of the lyrics it is easy to find topics that suit each class in terms of how advanced the class is. Music is something we all know and it is very accessible for the students and we can relate to it.

In my opinion and others quoted in my work above music provides security for the youngest learners when they are in unfamiliar situations and learning a new language. When you make up your own lyrics and songs you have the ability to control the topic and what language component you are focusing on each time. The youngest learners need a lot of action so it is effective to include movement when you are making teaching material for this age group. As discussed repetition is also important so one can manipulate the chorus in the song and make it focus on the topic or language component that is being dealt with at the time and have it repeated throughout the song to help students remember the new vocabulary or grammar rule.

Gyða Hrund Þorvaldsdóttir
References:


**Computer programs:**

Cubase recording program.

Fruity loops artificial drum machine.

Online crossword puzzle generators from www.discovery.com:
http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/CrissCrossSetupForm.asp
http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/WordSearchSetupForm.asp
Lenny the Lizard
Hello my name is Lenny! What is your name?

Hello my name is Lenny the Lizard, what is a lizard? It sounds like a wizard. Lizards have a long tail that’s green, and four legs that are really hard to keep clean. My eyes are yellow and tongue is bright red, the rest of me is green, like my ears and my head.

Good day, good day, what a great day today. Good day, good day, come out and play!
**Introduction/Colours/Bodyparts**

It is important to learn how to introduce yourself in the new language and it is probably the first thing everyone learns. We learn new languages to be able to communicate with other people and usually interactions with others start by people introducing themselves. As mentioned on p.12 methods like CLT has its main goal to gain communicative competence.

With this song I thought it would be good for the character, Lenny the Lizard to introduce himself and then the students can repeat the question to each other and introduce themselves. If the students are classmates and already know each other they are still communicating with each other in the new language and that is exciting. When the students sing this song I think it would be fun for them to shout their own name when Lenny asks “What is your name?”

This song has endless possibilities for activities and for example have I created word scramble for body parts, which can be fun to do. I put the words in Icelandic and the students are supposed to find their English equivalent and they are hidden backwards, across, diagonally up and down. The online generators used to make these offer the possibility of choosing how hard the words are to find. If you are working with very young children it can be helpful to have the words in English on the sheet so it is not as intimidating for them to finish the exercise and they can finish it even they are not yet proficient in writing. Word scrambles and crossword puzzles can be created for the colours as well. The song can be used to introduce personal pronouns to the students, for example my head, his foot etc. The teacher can also ask the students about the body parts that appear in the song and ask them to identify them. The students can point them out while listening to the song and therefore have and activity going on at the same time.

What is also fun to do when working with songs is clap to the rhythm. Students of all ages can do that and it can prepare them for working with syllables later. I have seen first hand how effective it is for students to break long words into syllables and it helps them with the spelling.
Bodyparts

Tunga
Augu
Fingur
Tær
Hendur
Fætur
Höfuð
Eyru
Munnur
Nef
Neglur
Hali
Hné

Lausn gátunnar
2.) *Lenny and Benny*

Lenny is a very healthy guy,  
he can jump so high he can almost touch the sky.  
Running around and playing with his friends,  
they have so much fun they wish the day would never end.

*Chorus:*  
Lenny jumps up, up, up  
he bends down, down, down.  
He crawls on the floor  
he walks through a door

Lenny likes to play hide and seek  
Benny the bear is it and he cannot peek.  
Lenny runs away from Benny the bear  
and he hides beneath his grandpa’s big, old chair.

Then suddenly he hears Benny shout:  
Dora the dog is about, I can see her snout!  
Hiding behind a tree is the place to be,  
but Billy found her out with a bone in her mouth.

*Chorus:*  
Lenny jumps up, up, up  
he bends down, down, down.  
He crawls on the floor  
he walks through a door

And in the end our Benny found them all,  
but some were really big and some were really small.
Prepositions/Movement/Animals

With these lyrics I chose to introduce prepositions that indicate movement. There are many different ways to use this song and its components. The youngest learners do not need to understand the word “preposition” but they can understand “movement”.

When you are making an assignment to a song you have to take into account the age and level of your students and decide how deeply you want to go into each component. You can also make the topic touch on something that the students are dealing with in their everyday life and get positive message through like anti bullying and as I mention here below racial discrimination. The key to working with songs is to be creative because the possibilities are endless.

A few examples of activities for different levels:

- The teacher can ask if the students can point out the words that indicate movement.

- The teacher can ask if the students know any other words that indicate movement. For example going through, going around going across etc.

- The teacher can use the TPR method to introduce the words to the students. For example the word “jump” and the teacher can jump and ask the students to do the same. As soon as the students learn the chorus they get really excited to display their knowledge and participate.

- When everyone has got the meaning of the words the class can listen to the song and act out all the movements. They can also play hide and seek.

- The teacher can bring up topics like friendship and in the song there are many different animals that are all playing together. It can lead to a philosophical discussion about all people being friends like the animals even though they are different. The lizard has scales, the sheep has wool, and the bear is furry etc. This can be related to racial discrimination.
• The teacher can point out the nouns that stand for the animals and can be a bridge to discussion about other words for animals that the students might know and for the youngest learners you can have a lot of fun acting out the animals for them if they don’t know the meaning of the word.

• In the text there are some adjectives, which can be brought to the students' attention. For example old, big, small.

• The text can also be used to introduce family relationships like grandfather or grandpa.
Crossword Puzzle

Put the name of the animals in English into the crossword puzzle

Down
1. Hundur
3. Kanína
5. Eðla
7. Kjúklingur
9. Ljón
11. Könguló
13. Fiskur
15. Refur
16. Hamstur

Across
2. Tígrisdýr
4. Fugl
6. Svín
7. Köttur
8. Fluga
10. Hestur
12. Önd
14. Gíraffi
17. Snákur
18. Kind
3.) The Lizard Dance

Chorus:
Come on let’s dance, don’t be shy!
Take a chance, there’s no need to cry!
This dance is so easy,
I’ll show you how; “Look, easy peasy!”

You take three steps ahead and then one back,
then you turn yourself around and do a little twist.
Four steps ahead and two steps back,
now waive as hard as you can and shake your fist.

Now it’s five big jumps as high as you can,
I think lizards jump higher than any grown man.
Now let’s see what you can do, maybe I’m wrong,
but for really high jumping your feet must be strong!

Chorus:
Come on let’s dance, don’t be shy!
Take a chance, there’s no need to cry!
This dance is so easy,
I’ll show you how; “Look, easy peasy!”

Now find a friend and you stand face to face,
clap your hands together, first left and then right.
Now shake and move all over the place,
One, two, three I want to sing and dance all night!
**Movement/Counting**

Songs like this can easily be re-written every day and vary from the group you are working with. This song works with numbers/counting and movement so it is very easy to make up your own verses and get the students involved in the writing. What do they want to do? They could pretend to be running on the spot, moving their hands and feet, shaking the head and other activities and include more numbers into the verses.

As mentioned by Brown (2006) it can be helpful for the students to realize that words can still rhyme even though they might be spelled differently. Homophonic words can help students to grasp pronunciation better.

As with the preposition song this would be ideal for the TPR method to introduce the words to the students and also just to have fun with the language. The students have the whole verse to do five jumps so it can be fun for the students to try to jump as high as they can. The verse where they are supposed to stand opposite each other and clap on each other’s hands is a game often played by the students themselves.

This song can also lead into discussions about how high can lizards actually jump. Even though “peasy” is not really a word, easy peasy is an expression that is often used in the English language and from a personal experience I know the young students find it funny. It can be fun to include a little slang or nonsense expressions here and there to emphasize the authenticity of the material.
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Pop songs are used a lot for the older students and for easily accessible material abounds. Lyrics are on the Internet and in many cases you can download the music as well. But pop songs might not be suitable for the youngest learners due to the content of the lyrics which are often more appealing to young adults. The vocabulary might also be too complicated. So my goal there is to make lyrics that are age appropriate and have a simple vocabulary but still have educational value. Assignments come with each song but they are merely suggestions as to how you can work with the songs. The possibilities are endless and the assignments can be designed to fit various ages and levels of ability.

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- **Self-centeredness.** The student bases his experience on everything that involves him and his life. Using the family and friends is a good start.

- **Short attention span.** The activities have to be interesting and lively to keep the students occupied. Here songs are very useful to rotate between activities and break up the lesson.

- **Learning through senses.** The young learner uses his senses to familiarize himself with the new language. Touching, hearing and seeing are very important to him.

- **Natural curiosity.** Young students find it interesting to learn a new language and like repeating what the adults are saying even though they don’t understand it right away and cannot yet express themselves. They still try, which often results in spontaneous speaking. The younger the students are, the less shy they are about making mistakes.

- **Learning through play.** Young students like to play and therefore games are important because students can have fun while acquiring new language skills. Moreover, games and promote diversity in the curriculum.
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Singing in the classroom is not intended to replace valuable speaking techniques. It is an additional and enjoyable way of presenting language imaginatively (p.53).

A variety of exercises can be used with song lyrics such as information gap activities, finding synonyms and antonyms, building vocabulary, writing a story on the topic of the song, answering questions orally and in writing about the topic of the lyrics, creating discussion, talking about slang and abbreviations, hearing correct pronunciation, and the list goes on.

Eken provides examples of how one can use songs in the ESL classroom:

- To present a topic, a language point, lexis, etc.
- To practice a language point, lexis, etc.
- To focus on common learner errors in a more direct way
- To encourage extensive and intensive listening
- To stimulate discussion of attitudes and feelings
- To encourage creativity and use of imagination
- To provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere
- To bring variety and fun to learning

Eken (1996:46)
Researchers in this field say that using songs in the ESL classroom can give a break from the regular classroom routine as well as develop the four skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking (Schoepp:2001). This is supported by Birkenshaw-Fleming (1989) who states that most students manage to memorize information much quicker and easier when it is put to music. They mention as an example the alphabet, or as we know it the song about the ABC. What is also important is that songs in the second language can give good exposure to correct usage of grammar, especially on topics that may be confusing to explain such as collocations since lyrics are authentic language.

5. Language Components

Herbst (1988) states that music is extremely valuable for teaching new vocabulary or structures in the target language and Horn (2007) says that music can help with pronunciation, vocabulary enrichment and articulation. Other theorist such as Bayless and Ramsey (1987) agree with Herbst and Horn. In terms of pronunciation, Brown (2006) points out that songs like *Twinkle Little Star* that have rhyme at the end of each line can make students realize that words that don’t look the same can still sound the same and are therefore homophones.

Example:

Twinkle, twinkle little *star*,
how I wonder what you *are*.
Up above the world so *high*,
like a diamond in the *sky*. 
6. Repetition in Songs

Many studies show that repetition is highly effective for students to remember newly introduced vocabulary. When making the lyrics I made for this project I decided to use repetition after my research on the topic. Many prestigious people have examined the effect of repetition on children and also regarding to learning a new language.

For example the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget did numerous studies on children and how they function in the world around them and how that affected children’s mental development. Piaget saw children as active learners and it was through taking action to solve a problem or the task that lay before them that learning took place. So the most important thing Piaget points out is that the child is an active learner/thinker who works with ideas to gain knowledge. Children want to learn because they are looking for solutions and the environment, i.e. the teacher and the classroom being the environment, have the opportunity to come up with a solution (Cameron, Lynne: 2001). Piaget also described the egocentric language in which children talk. They don’t care if there is a receiver for this babble but they just like hearing themselves talk and repeat words (Piaget: 1923). What Piaget described there might explain why repetition in songs can be effective and enjoyable for the children while acquiring a new language.

To support this theory Murphey (1990) claims that for young children, songs seem to pave the way for language development and many studies seem to lead towards the conclusion that if the parents respond and repeat the infant’s cooing and babbling it can be an immense factor in the language development later in the child’s life.

Krashen (1983) talks about the automatic repetitions as an expression of Chomsky’s Language Acquisition Device or LAD where in short Chomsky states that our brain has the natural tendency to repeat what we hear around us so it can understand and process what is going on. Related to this matter, Krashen states that songs can in many cases help activate LAD.

Cabrera and Martinez (2001) did an experimental study on the effect of repetition on the performance of primary school children. The experiment took place in an ESL classroom with sixty Spanish-speaking students who were randomly divided into two groups and listened to a story that had two different versions.
The first version was simplified and to the second version they added 68 new utterances, 48 of which were repetitions and 20 were comprehension checks. They estimated that the second version had repetition of 22%. The results from their experiment showed that the students who listened to the story with the repetition performed significantly better on a comprehension test they took than the students who didn’t have the version with the repetition.

7. Music as an Enhancement to Listening Skills

Listening is the foundation of all human communication and Krouse (1988) points out that when first graders listen to English they are being exposed to sounds and pronunciation that they might never have heard before, for example the new language might have a different phonetic system than the students’ mother tongue and therefore need an active learning process to memorize those unfamiliar sounds. This requires that the students listen with an active mind and to rouse interest in the subject songs can be a useful material. Languages are normally learned by ear and the learner’s first exposure to structure and vocabulary of the new language is usually through listening. Like language, music is based on sounds and rhythm so that is why songs can enhance the students’ listening skills.

Extensive studies have been done on the field of listening and many theories have been put forward. For example active listening which is the process where students start to add feeling and understanding to their ability to listen and check for understanding. Active listening can also be called listen for understanding or listen for meaning. Body language is an important thing to pay attention to while listening for understanding (McDonough and Shaw:2003).

Songs in the classroom are often based on body language or body movement, for example Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes. The students have to listen and understand in order to follow the song and know what body part to point at.

Cullen (1999) discusses two processes that are involved in listening which are put to use when singing a song in the ESL classroom. It is the activity that goes along with the song that tells us which process is being used. Cullen states that it is essential for developing listening comprehension to practice both of these processes. Those
processes are first the bottom-up processing and then the listener builds up the sounds into sentences, words and meaning. The other one is called top-down processing and that is where in order to understand the meaning of a message the listener uses his background knowledge.

Horn (2007) mentions that auditory discrimination is the ability to hear the difference between sounds and is very important when learning a new language. The students must be able to hear the phonetic difference and pronunciation in words of the target language. She also talks about the importance of music when it comes to L2 acquisition and developing listening skills, which are of course very important in language learning because so much of the learning takes place aurally.

8. Communicative Language Teaching

Music can be a vital factor in both fluency and accuracy work. Students can practice their pronunciation and vocabulary on words they are being exposed to for the first time and the teacher can also go over grammatical points that might be in the lyrics. As discussed above music can enhance the students’ listening skills and as Rost (1990) states that one of the most important skills that are used when working with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that the listening component is in order and the skill of listening is nurtured and he emphasizes that CLT has provided an important role for listening skills.

CLT has its main goal gaining communicative competence. In order to achieve that it is very important to work with all the components of the language. CLT embraces authentic material so the students will get as practical training as possible. Games, information gap, role-play and other activities are common in CLT and accuracy and fluency are key words (Larsen-Freeman:2000).
9. Total Physical Response

Cronje (1997) and Richard and Rodgers (1995) talk about the teaching method Total Physical Response (TPR) developed by Dr. James J. Asher.

TPR is a combination of speech and action and teaches the language through movement. At first you give the instruction through an act and physical movements and then later the speech is added in. This approach has been used for a long time in language teaching and especially with young learners because you teach the language at an introductory level with this approach (Richard and Rodgers, 1995).

*Simon Says* is a good example of a game that promotes TPR and the method is also efficient for storytelling. TPR can also be used with songs and is mentioned in Appendix I how it can be connected with the lyrics in that section. TPR can be very effective when the students are being introduced to a new word that for example indicates movement and then the teacher can act out the word.

By using TPR Asher states that the learners gain their listening abilities because the approach requires that the student responds physically to the spoken language that the teacher gives (Asher:1981) and according to Horn (2007), based on her studies, CLT and TPR have provided a newly emphasized role for listening skills in language learning.
10. Conclusion

For young learners it can be a little intimidating learning a new language. Music is so enriched in the culture of every country so it can be something that the students know and can relate to. Music can appeal to their creative minds and students who are shy or might have learning problems can all relate to singing and is therefore a great way to get all the students involved. Music is also authentic material and by using authentic material you can relate to the students’ interests and also provide valuable insight in culture both in the present and the past and as I have established important language components like vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical points can easily be introduced through the song.

What intrigues me the most is what a great opportunity for listening exercise songs can be. Due to the authenticity of the lyrics it is easy to find topics that suit each class in terms of how advanced the class is. Music is something we all know and it is very accessible for the students and we can relate to it.

In my opinion and others quoted in my work above music provides security for the youngest learners when they are in unfamiliar situations and learning a new language. When you make up your own lyrics and songs you have the ability to control the topic and what language component you are focusing on each time. The youngest learners need a lot of action so it is effective to include movement when you are making teaching material for this age group. As discussed repetition is also important so one can manipulate the chorus in the song and make it focus on the topic or language component that is being dealt with at the time and have it repeated throughout the song to help students remember the new vocabulary or grammar rule.

__________________________________________________________________________

Gyða Hrund Þorvaldsdóttir
References:


**Computer programs:**

Cubase recording program.

Fruity loops artificial drum machine.

Online crossword puzzle generators from www.discovery.com: 
  http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/CrissCrossSetupForm.asp
  http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/WordSearchSetupForm.asp
Lenny the Lizard
1.) **Hello my name is Lenny!**

Hello my name is Lenny! What is your name?

Hello my name is Lenny the Lizard, what is a lizard? It sounds like a wizard. Lizards have a long tail that’s green, and four legs that are really hard to keep clean. My eyes are yellow and tongue is bright red, the rest of me is green, like my ears and my head.

Good day, good day, what a great day today. Good day, good day, come out and play!
**Introduction/Colours/Bodyparts**

It is important to learn how to introduce yourself in the new language and it is probably the first thing everyone learns. We learn new languages to be able to communicate with other people and usually interactions with others start by people introducing themselves. As mentioned on p.12 methods like CLT has its main goal to gain communicative competence.

With this song I thought it would be good for the character, Lenny the Lizard to introduce himself and then the students can repeat the question to each other and introduce themselves. If the students are classmates and already know each other they are still communicating with each other in the new language and that is exciting. When the students sing this song I think it would be fun for them to shout their own name when Lenny asks “What is your name?”

This song has endless possibilities for activities and for example have I created word scramble for body parts, which can be fun to do. I put the words in Icelandic and the students are supposed to find their English equivalent and they are hidden backwards, across, diagonally up and down. The online generators used to make these offer the possibility of choosing how hard the words are to find. If you are working with very young children it can be helpful to have the words in English on the sheet so it is not as intimidating for them to finish the exercise and they can finish it even they are not yet proficient in writing. Word scrambles and crossword puzzles can be created for the colours as well. The song can be used to introduce personal pronouns to the students, for example my head, his foot etc. The teacher can also ask the students about the body parts that appear in the song and ask them to identify them. The students can point them out while listening to the song and therefore have and activity going on at the same time.

What is also fun to do when working with songs is clap to the rhythm. Students of all ages can do that and it can prepare them for working with syllables later. I have seen first hand how effective it is for students to break long words into syllables and it helps them with the spelling.
Bodyparts

Tunga
Augu
Fingur
Tær
Hendur
Fætur
Höfuð
Eyru
Munnur
Nef
Neglur
Hali
Hné

Lausn gátunnar
2.) \textit{Lenny and Benny}

Lenny is a very healthy guy, he can jump so high he can almost touch the sky. Running around and playing with his friends, they have so much fun they wish the day would never end.

\textit{Chorus:}
Lenny jumps up, up, up
he bends down, down, down.
He crawls on the floor
he walks through a door

Lenny likes to play hide and seek
Benny the bear is it and he cannot peek.
Lenny runs away from Benny the bear
and he hides beneath his grandpa’s big, old chair.

Then suddenly he hears Benny shout:
Dora the dog is about, I can see her snout!
Hiding behind a tree is the place to be,
but Billy found her out with a bone in her mouth.

\textit{Chorus:}
Lenny jumps up, up, up
he bends down, down, down.
He crawls on the floor
he walks through a door

And in the end our Benny found them all,
but some were really big and some were really small.
Prepositions/Movement/Animals

With these lyrics I chose to introduce prepositions that indicate movement. There are many different ways to use this song and its components. The youngest learners do not need to understand the word “preposition” but they can understand “movement”.

When you are making an assignment to a song you have to take into account the age and level of your students and decide how deeply you want to go into each component. You can also make the topic touch on something that the students are dealing with in their everyday life and get positive message through like anti bullying and as I mention here below racial discrimination. The key to working with songs is to be creative because the possibilities are endless.

A few examples of activities for different levels:

- The teacher can ask if the students can point out the words that indicate movement.

- The teacher can ask if the students know any other words that indicate movement. For example going through, going around going across etc.

- The teacher can use the TPR method to introduce the words to the students. For example the word “jump” and the teacher can jump and ask the students to do the same. As soon as the students learn the chorus they get really excited to display their knowledge and participate.

- When everyone has got the meaning of the words the class can listen to the song and act out all the movements. They can also play hide and seek.

- The teacher can bring up topics like friendship and in the song there are many different animals that are all playing together. It can lead to a philosophical discussion about all people being friends like the animals even though they are different. The lizard has scales, the sheep has wool, and the bear is furry etc. This can be related to racial discrimination.
• The teacher can point out the nouns that stand for the animals and can be a bridge to discussion about other words for animals that the students might know and for the youngest learners you can have a lot of fun acting out the animals for them if they don’t know the meaning of the word.

• In the text there are some adjectives, which can be brought to the students attention. For example old, big, small.

• The text can also be used to introduce family relationships like grandfather or grandpa.
Crossword Puzzle

Put the name of the animals in English into the crossword puzzle

Down
1. Hundur
3. Kanína
5. Eðla
7. Kjúklingur
9. Ljón
11. Könguló
13. Fiskur
15. Refur
16. Hamstur
17. Snákur

Across
2. Tígrisdýr
4. Fugl
6. Svín
7. Köttur
8. Fluga
10. Hestur
12. Önd
14. Gíraffi
18. Kind
3.) The Lizard Dance

Chorus:
Come on let’s dance, don’t be shy!
Take a chance, there’s no need to cry!
This dance is so easy,
I’ll show you how; “Look, easy peasy!”

You take three steps ahead and then one back,
then you turn yourself around and do a little twist.
Four steps ahead and two steps back,
now waive as hard as you can and shake your fist.

Now it’s five big jumps as high as you can,
I think lizards jump higher than any grown man.
Now let’s see what you can do, maybe I’m wrong,
but for really high jumping your feet must be strong!

Chorus:
Come on let’s dance, don’t be shy!
Take a chance, there’s no need to cry!
This dance is so easy,
I’ll show you how; “Look, easy peasy!”

Now find a friend and you stand face to face,
clap your hands together, first left and then right.
Now shake and move all over the place,
One, two, three I want to sing and dance all night!
Movement/Counting

Songs like this can easily be re-written every day and vary from the group you are working with. This song works with numbers/counting and movement so it is very easy to make up your own verses and get the students involved in the writing. What do they want to do? They could pretend to be running on the spot, moving their hands and feet, shaking the head and other activities and include more numbers into the verses.

As mentioned by Brown (2006) it can be helpful for the students to realize that words can still rhyme even though they might be spelled differently. Homophonic words can help students to grasp pronunciation better.

As with the preposition song this would be ideal for the TPR method to introduce the words to the students and also just to have fun with the language. The students have the whole verse to do five jumps so it can be fun for the students to try to jump as high as they can. The verse where they are supposed to stand opposite each other and clap on each other’s hands is a game often played by the students themselves.

This song can also lead into discussions about how high can lizards actually jump. Even though “peasy” is not really a word, easy peasy is an expression that is often used in the English language and from a personal experience I know the young students find it funny. It can be fun to include a little slang or nonsense expressions here and there to emphasize the authenticity of the material.