

Ornerová Lenka

The Use of Pop Songs in the EFL Classroom

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

EFL – English as a Foreign Language, normally understood to be in a country where English is not the native language.

ESL – English as a Second Language, normally understood to be in a country where English is the native language.

Language acquisition – language that is acquired subconsciously (Krashen, 1982)

Language learning – language that is learned consciously (Krashen, 1982)

L1 – learner’s mother tongue

L2 - second or foreign language

MI theory – Multiple Intelligences Theory, introduced in 1983 by Howard Garner in his *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*.

TPR – Total Physical Response, introduced in the 1960’s by James Asher

Pop music – modern music that is popular with young people and usually consists of simple tunes with a strong beat (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)

Popular vs. Pop song – according to Gammond (1991), the use of the word “popular” in relation to the lighter forms of music goes back to the mid-19th century. The abbreviation “pop” was adopted in the 1950’s as the umbrella name for a special kind of musical product aimed at a teenage market. In my diploma project, the terms “popular song” and “pop song” are used interchangeably.

Grammar school – type of school in the Czech Republic providing lower and upper secondary education and preparing students for university education.

ABSTRACT

Although using music and songs in language teaching is not a new idea, little research has been undertaken on the use of pop songs in the EFL classroom. In this study, I analyze the use and value of pop songs from a teacher's point of view and students' attitudes to a pop song based experiment. Furthermore, the inclusion of pop songs in lower secondary and upper secondary school textbooks has been analyzed. The research findings show that learning English through pop songs is very popular among teenagers. Teachers use songs regularly within the curriculum and commonly used textbooks include pop songs as well.

INTRODUCTION

I have chosen the topic of using pop songs in the EFL classroom because I strongly believe that working with pop songs is a highly motivational device. When I was a student at a lower and upper secondary school, listening to songs in English classes was my favourite activity. I have always wanted to be able to understand the lyrics of songs I listened to. Later, I realized that I have learned a lot from listening to pop songs and analyzing their lyrics. Therefore, in my diploma project, I would like to prove that using pop songs is a highly motivational device in teaching English with instructional value, and that students enjoy working with pop songs.

The theoretical part of this diploma project is based on relevant sources of background literature. In the first two chapters, the use of songs is described with regard to motivation and the Multiple Intelligences Theory. The third and fourth chapter deal with the reasons for using songs and their classification. In the last two chapters of the theoretical part, pedagogical principles of using pop songs in class, as well as the pros and cons of teaching through pop songs are presented.

The practical part is based on the findings of three surveys I have conducted in the field of using songs in the EFL classroom. In the first part of the research, I present an analysis of questionnaires which I distributed among English teachers at lower and upper secondary schools and grammar schools. In the second part of the research, I describe students' attitudes to pop song based lessons which I taught during my teaching practice at grammar schools. In the third part of the research, I analyze the types of songs presented in commonly used textbooks at lower and upper secondary schools. In addition, I present a self-developed teaching material containing a list of pop songs suitable for the EFL classroom. In the last part of the practical part, I answer the research questions (see page 44) and provide some implications for my own teaching.