

Why aren't songs and music used more extensively in language classrooms? One reason is the general lack of literature, especially articles that give teachers classroom techniques. The only technique that is well known and consistently used is the cloze passage and it is, for that reason, overused. Also many articles on teaching songs are, in fact, guides for teaching a particular song. An article titled "How I Teach Song X" is helpful as far as it goes, but it doesn't give teachers much help in using other songs.

Another reason is that the literature that does exist lacks a theoretical perspective. Research-oriented articles on the use of songs and music are few in number. Many of the articles published by ESL and EFL teachers appear in newsletters or teacher magazines that seem to scatter to the wind and are, for all practical purposes, lost. Foreign language (FL) teachers, for example French teachers in the United States, tend to write for more established journals, which makes their materials easier to locate, but I don't think FL teachers read the ESL/EFL literature or that ESL/EFL teachers read the FL literature. Nor are there published collections of articles or teacher reference books on the teaching of songs and music. These two reasons, the lack of a theoretical literature and the lack of a body of available techniques, seem to be the main reasons that songs and music are not used more extensively in language classrooms.

This second special issue on songs and music (the first being Vol. X:10, Sept. 1986) addresses these issues. From a global point of view, Tim Murphey analyzes how teachers can begin to understand the discourse of pop songs. From a practical point of view, David Martin's article considers how to teach the cohesive device of anaphoric reference. Jayne Gaunt describes how to use songs to increase writing skills, and Dale Griffie considers the possibility of song types as a way of classifying and sharing song techniques. Finally, Bonnie Jinmon reviews a popular song book.

As the Audio-Lingual Method recedes, we can also expect one of its children, the ESL songbook, to recede with it. In its place will come an increased awareness of popular songs and music. We hope this special issue will be a step in the right direction.

**Dale T. Griffie, Guest Editor**

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## The Top Forty for Teachers (in no special order)

by Tim Murphey

This is a brainstorming article. It aims to partially answer some basic questions and to stimulate further thought. It is organized around the following questions:

- A) How do we use songs every day?
- B) What might we do with them in language classes?
- C) What are some of the pedagogical considerations in using songs?
- D) What kind of discourse do pop songs contain?
- E) What can neighboring disciplines tell us about song and music?

A, B, and C are common knowledge and you can certainly add your own ideas to these short lists and considerations. D, however, tries to take a deeper look at exactly what the features of the language in pop songs are and how these features may make them good material to exploit. Finally, E briefly takes us beyond the strictly EFL horizon with various insights from an array of domains, indicating that there may indeed be more to songs than meets the ear.

**A. In everyday normal living, what do we usually do with songs or the topic of songs?**

1. listen

2. sing while we listen
3. sing without listening to any recording (+ involuntary rehearsal)
4. talk about the music
5. talk about the lyrics
6. talk about the singer/group
7. talk about video clips
8. use songs and music to set or change an atmosphere or mood, as background furnishing
9. to make a social environment, form a feeling of community, make friends and lovers
10. read about their production, performance, effect, authors, producers, audiences ...
11. use them to dream with
12. use songs to make internal associations with the people, places, and times in our lives that the songs accompany, so they become our life's personal sound track

**Some people also ...**

13. write songs
14. perform songs
15. make video clips
16. do interviews

17. write articles
  18. do surveys, make hit lists
- B. In TEFL, anything we can do with a text we can also do with songs, or texts about songs. In addition to 1-18 above, here are some additional things we might do in teaching.**
19. study grammar
  20. practice selective-targeted auditory comprehension
  21. read songs, articles, books, with linguistic purposes
  22. compose songs, articles about songs, letters to singers, questionnaires
  24. discuss a song or some aspect of A1-18
  25. translate songs
  26. write dialogs using a song's words, with artists or between characters
  27. use video clips in many ways (see Murphey, 1988)
  28. do role plays (as people in the song, or the artist/interviewer)
  29. dictate a song
  30. use a song for a cloze passage, guessing first
  31. use music for background to other activities
  32. integrate songs into project work
  33. energize or relax classes mentally
  34. practice pronunciation, intonation, and stress
  35. break the routine
  36. do choral repetition
  37. teach vocabulary
  38. teach culture
  39. learn about your students and from your students, letting them choose and explain their music
  40. have fun

### C. Being natural and being academic

Looking at what we normally do with songs, outside of classes (A) and then looking at what we may do with them in classes (B) may provide us with many more ways of exploiting them. The B listings are not necessarily better for classroom use than those in the A group, and many in the B group may happen naturally through just doing what comes naturally. However, we have to be careful not to "kill the material" by doing too much of serious B work. That's why B-40 is probably the most important thing to include when using songs in classes. (Have fun!)

### Sex

When exploiting songs, we can use the topic without ever necessarily hearing a song. We may exploit the topic through readings (pop magazines, etc.), questionnaires, and discussions, using the high interest afforded the subject without necessarily using the songs themselves. In this regard it's similar to sex. We don't have to have it to get most people's attention (usually). We only have to mention it.

### Student centering

The way we exploit song materials to their fullest potential is not by looking at the materials, but rather

by using and exploring what's inside the students. The materials are mostly just initiators of student interaction. Thus, the students' own ideas, meanings and emotions are the real materials we are using. Music and song are immensely useful and motivational in getting our students to feel, think, and react.

### Connecting worlds

Probably the greatest advantage to using songs chosen by the students themselves are that we are connecting "English learning" with their world, their concerns, their fun. Pop songs are in many ways the ESP of adolescents. In the process of using their songs, teachers learn a lot about their students, and they can build rapport through showing respect for their students' world. Then students are usually more open to the teacher's world, the teacher's concerns and values. Respect, tolerance, and openness to learning is a two-way street. It's nice if the teacher can give a good example first (and teach students how to learn different things by giving the example of doing so herself).

### Teachers learning from students learning from teachers learning from ...

It's also good to realize that it's impossible to only teach "language" (1) devoid of content and (2) without being a communication example yourself. Language is what is the ostensible focus but amazingly enough gets acquired on the basis of the content and our "how" example. Content theoretically can be about anything our students are interested in. However, students learn much more than language and content: they learn how to communicate in interpersonal situations. If the teacher shows respect, tolerance, and openness, the students have a good chance of learning that. If the teacher is openly critical and intolerant, students will usually learn that as well. As examples for young learners, we have immense power. Let's show them how to be good interpersonal communicative learners by being so ourselves first.

### D. The discourse of pop songs

Pop songs are affective, simple and repetitive, with psycholinguistic and neuropsychological qualities that may make the discourse extremely useful in the classroom. The information on these characteristics comes from a pluridimensional analysis done on the top 50 English songs in the European Hot 100 in *Media & Music's* Sept. 12, 1987 edition (see Murphey, Ph.D. thesis [forthcoming]).

*Affective:* A content analysis revealed that 80% of the songs had to do with love in one of the three phases (beginning, established, or ending /-ed). In fact, *love* was the most frequent noun/verb in the lyrics. Fleisch's (1974) interest scale, based upon the percent of personal words and the personal sentences, yielded a score of 84, described as highly dramatic with great human interest.

Of course, included in the affective content of a song are the music and the vocalizations of the singer.

It is hard to measure to what degree music is affective, but we do know that music for most of us is treated in the more feeling right hemisphere. The non-verbal vocalizations of singers (nonsense syllables, shouts, screams, breathing, gasps, etc.) definitely appeal to affect over abstract intellect and add a personal dimension far beyond what we can read. Still further, the intonation, stress, rhythm and pronunciation features of particular singers also go far in personalizing a text.

*Simple and repetitive:* Based upon syllable length and sentence length, pop songs rate 97 on Flesch's (1974) readability scale, or the reading level of an American child after five years of schooling, or an adult who stopped schooling after four years. The type/token ratio of songs is .08 which is more repetition than in comics or other light reading. The word per minute rate is only 85 (after subtracting musical intros, bridges and exits). This is about half the rate of normal conversational speech.

*Pop song discourse:* A discourse analysis done of the songs using a model developed by Bronckart (1985) revealed that although they were defined by their original situation of production as "narratives" (produced for an audience which does not participate in their production), upon analysis the language in the songs was that of a conversation, or situational discourse. This was principally due to their great use of first and second person pronouns and the high verb count. To resolve this apparent contradiction, I suggest the following psycholinguistic view of song audition.

First of all, the situation of (re)production of a song is wherever that song might be heard, not its original recording — thus it becomes part of that situation in which it is heard: it furnishes it. Because listeners tend to associate what is happening to them with the songs they are hearing, mostly unconsciously, songs are assigned meaning idiosyncratically by the listener. Think for a moment of an old song that you like and chances are that elements of the place or time period when you first heard it will creep into your memory of the song.

We are further helped, or encouraged, to assign our own meanings and people to the roles in songs by the fact that songs hardly ever give specifics as to place, time, and persons. In the corpus studied, 98% of the songs had *I* referents while 88% had *you* referents, with only one each of these referents being specified by proper names. The non-specificity of these pronouns mean that if there is specificity it is provided by the listener extratextually, for it isn't in the text. Furthermore, 94% have no time of enunciation whatsoever and 80% have no place mentioned. Even the times and places that are mentioned, or implied, are usually vague themselves (night, summertime, car, disco). In none of the songs were precise dates or hours, and in only one was there a named place. This unspecificity allows songs to "happen" wherever and whenever they are heard. A further indicator of inspecificity are the genders of singers, lyrical speakers, and addressees. No gender reference is given in 62% of the songs, and

only 12% of the songs are definitely written to be sung by one sex to another.

The contextual framework for most songs can be summarized as follows: **somebody-I is in some phase of love with somebody-you (usually the addressee) here (wherever the listener is) and now (whenever you hear the song)**. How this framework can be applied idiosyncratically by each listener is similar to the appeal of the Silent Way's use of Cuisenaire rods: a rod is simply a colored block but can be the concrete referent for anything our minds imagine, or are led to imagine. And the images our minds create are of "our" town, house, life, etc., not just the one in the picture because a rod is just an anchor for an idea and imposes no details — similar to pop songs.

Thus the vague referents open themselves up to assignment from the listener: they make songs capable of being appropriated by the listeners for their use and assigned individual meaning for their situations. Finally, this is the goal of our language learning and teaching: that students are provided with a framework of language that they can use to express their own realities and communicate their own interpersonal messages.

#### E. Perspectives from neighboring fields

•Some anthropologists think that song (music-like vocalization) was a necessary predecessor to humanity's acquisition of language in the first place. Livingstone (1973) proposes that our ancestors sang before they spoke.

•Ontogenetically, we know song-like vocalizations precede language in babies (Konopczynski, 1988), something most parents need no research to confirm. That many similar vocalizations are mirrored in modern song is easy to hear.

•In Piaget's terms (1923), songs may be seen as a continuation of a child's "egocentric language" in which the child plays with talk, with little concern as to whether or not someone is listening or responding. Egocentric language and song may not be necessarily communicative to another person but rather language-play internally to ourselves, a sort of pre-communicative kneading of the dough to get it right, a type of chewing of the cud.

•This regurgitation of language intake is aided by the Song-Stuck-in-My-Head-Phenomenon (Murphey, forthcoming), which describes the common experience of the last song you hear echoing in your head for awhile, which may be pleasant or unpleasant. This may be associated with the Din (the humming of language in a language acquirer's mind) which Krashen (1983) suggests is a manifestation of the Language Acquisition Device (Chomsky's LAD) in operation.

•Neurologically, Oliver Sachs (personal communication) relates "how Parkinsonians tho' unable to walk, may be able to dance; and though unable to talk, may be able to sing." It seems that at least sometimes our bodies have a kinetic melodic knowledge separate from

and perhaps superior to our abstract analytical capacities. The music seems to make us naturally, mathematically, in tune.

•The therapeutic (with aphasics, in childbirth, and even to relax surgical teams) and excitatory qualities of music (in discos, aerobics, and in many sports) are making it a standard requirement for many, not to mention advertisers, restaurants, shopping malls, and movies.

•Lyczak (1979) has suggested with some interesting research that learning unavoidably takes place simply through exposure to another language. It could be that the Anglo-American domination of pop music world-wide may be making a greater psycholinguistic contribution to the learning of English than we have heretofore given it credit for. In Switzerland (and probably many other countries) adolescents average between eight and 12 hours a week of contact with what Murphey (1984) calls "English language music."

•Kadota (1987) suggests that acquiring a language's prosodic imprint helps in efficient silent reading: apparently prosody helps us to form semantic chunks and anticipate language in on-line processing while we do a sort of fast-forward sub-vocalization when we read. Following this line of thought, learners should have a lot of listening contact before the other skills since it will help them to develop the others more quickly. For infants, this is just what happens -- they are allowed to be silent and listen to a lot of melodically intoned motherese. Songs may serve a similar purpose for adults.

#### To tentatively conclude

I have said elsewhere that the language in most pop songs may be considered a type of motherese as they contain many of its characteristics, principally affect (see Snow & Ferguson, 1976), or a type of foreigner talk because of their lyrical simplicity. But they are actually more complex than motherese and much more affective than foreigner talk. They are affective foreigner talk and also, in Piaget's terms, egocentric language play. At the same time pop songs present no risk to the listener because (1) the listeners are in control of the assignment of meaning and, (2) when using songs on their own, they can mechanically manipulate the input and risk no negative feedback for non-attention or failure to understand. To this extent, pop song is like an affectively communicating teddy-bear-in-the-car (Albert & Murphey, 1985).

For adolescents especially, pop songs may be considered tools for coping with life. Pop songs may be a kind of ersatz motherese for youth at a time when approaching adulthood and a blossoming emotional system may be accompanied by the withdrawal of affective input from parents. But for all of us songs become personal sound tracks (verily for those with Walkmans) scoring our emotional lives.

Songs should not be viewed as a new methodology but rather extremely valuable tools which used even

occasionally will have a salutary impact upon students. Most educational institutions typically lag behind a generation or two in the understanding of the youth they teach. At least partially through pop music, I feel that we can learn from our students and involve them in the type of interactive education that most motivates them to learn because it shows relevance to their own lives. It allows us to meet them where they are, a necessary step if we wish to take them somewhere.

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