

SOME IDEAS OF USING SONGS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Bobyleva L.I.

Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov

Abstract: the article deals with a set of techniques for teaching English pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking by practising songs.

Keywords: songs, the target language, rules of class organization, techniques for using songs.

There is hardly any culture in the world that has not developed music as an integral part of recording messages and feelings. In our effort to expose foreign language learners to as many aspects of the target language as possible, we can practise songs to teach pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking.

Songs can be exploited to use the target language while avoiding some disadvantages of other techniques:

1. they can introduce language in a meaningful context;
2. they can reinforce language already learnt;
3. listening to songs is a realistic/authentic activity, it is a part of the outside world making the lesson more meaningful and comprehensible;
4. listening to songs maximizes learners' participation and involvement as it is something they can identify with;
5. songs encourage creativity and use of imagination;
6. they provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere, bring variety and fun to teaching and learning.

But these aims do not mean much on their own if we do not consider the following rules of class organization:

1. Always set students a task. Even the simplest task will make them pay attention to language and not just to music.

2. Give clear instructions and check that they have understood them. Give an example if necessary.

3. Grade the task to match the level of the class. Introduce all necessary vocabulary before you play the song. If the task is too difficult or if learners cannot understand at least a part of the song, they will certainly give up.

4. Songs in class should offer a chance for work, not undisciplined noise. Students can enjoy themselves while working.

Songs can present a problem because it is sometimes difficult to know exactly which song students like at a particular time and which ones, very popular last month, have gone out of favour. There can be two ways dealing with this problem. The first is to have students bring their own favourite songs for the teacher to analyze the vocabulary and make up some preparatory exercises. Another solution is to use older songs, and to ask students whether they still have merit despite their antiquity [1, p. 243]. It goes without saying that a teacher's selection of a technique or a set of techniques should be guided by his/her objectives for the class. We have come to the conclusion that the following recommendations are absolutely helpful.

Teaching pronunciation:

1. pupils get gradually involved in music learning the beat. They hum and don't have to worry about having a good voice;

2. pupils are asked to clap when they hear a particular word or a sound, the effort is concentrated on the rhythm;

3. the class as a whole first and then different groups in turn sing, tension being relieved.

Lexical-grammar practice:

1. a number of vocabulary items that match the level of your class are chosen. You can concentrate on word forms (e.g. past tenses) or lexical fields (e.g. colours);

2. put these words up on the board or hand them out on a sheet of paper;

3. ask pupils to listen and put them in the order they appear in the song.

This task can train students to listen intensively and for specific information.

Another activity can be organized in the following way: make a list from words in the song you would like pupils to listen to and practise; then ask them to listen to the song and circle any antonym/synonym they have found.

Listening comprehension:

1. write the lyrics on the board making certain changes;

2. ask learners to read the lyrics carefully. They should be encouraged to pay attention to the content, style, rhyme, etc.;

3. ask students to listen to the song and keep notes of the changes.

A reordering technique presupposes:

1. verses are put on the board in a jumbled order;

2. learners are asked to put them in the right order;

3. the song is played to let them find how the original version differs from their own.

Speaking and role-play:

1. prepare a list of questions on the song. Make sure that they range from straightforward factual questions to more subtle inference ones;

2. play the song and ask students to answer the questions;

3. use the song as the starting point for discussion on a more general topic.

As a follow-up activity learners can be asked to make up dialogues and dramatize the song. Pupils can draw a picture they visualized while listening. Then they are to discuss in pairs what they have drawn (at this stage the teacher can rewind the tape and play the music again).

Thus songs can be a magic tonic. They can amuse and entertain, and make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning, but as other activities songs should be included in the lesson plan only when they promote a definite goal. The techniques for using songs can be outlined as:

1. fill in the blanks;

2. put in the correct order;
3. identify the wrong word/phrase;
4. write in the missing line;
5. circle antonyms/synonyms;
6. imagine and draw;
7. discuss attitude and feelings;
8. dramatize;
9. complete;
10. clap and sing, etc.

When motivated, even those who are skeptical about their ability to respond to music often end up being convinced despite themselves.

REFERENCES

1. Harmer, J. *The practice of English language teaching* / J. Harmer. – 3-rd ed. – London: Longman, 2002. – 371 p.

