

## HOW BRITISH ROCK CAN HELP YOU LEARN ENGLISH

### КАК БРИТАНСКИЙ РОК МОЖЕТ ПОМОЧЬ В ИЗУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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The article gives a brief survey of the history of rock-music in Great Britain, enumerates popular British groups and musicians in the chronological order. The article also contains short analysis of some lyrics, results of the survey conducted among students and draws some conclusions why and how rock-songs can help you learn the English language.

**Key words:** rock-music, history, bands, groups, representatives, songs, students, to learn.

As the American poet and an interpreter of 19th century Henry Wadsworth Longfellow argues: “Music is a universal language of humanity”. Modern linguistics speaks of the close relationship between language and culture. Music as a kind of art by which people convey their moods and feelings, regardless of their genre, is an integral part of both world and national cultures.

An important issue of our study is the connection between listening to rock music and studying English. To begin with, let’s discover what British rock-music is.

Since the 60s of the previous century such small country as Great Britain has remained number one country in the world of popular music. The number of rock icons per capita seems implausible here. There is a paradox that says that rock and roll appeared in the US, but rock music – in the UK.

It is worth noting that the roots of British rock-and-roll differed significantly from the history of American rock. If in the US rock combined such styles as blues and country, then English rock and roll actually came from skiffle - folk singing to the accompaniment of guitar and harmonics. The first group of John Lennon, “the Quarrymen”, was such. Skiffle was also played by Van Morrison, Mick Jagger, Jimmy Page and David Gilmore. And the main popularizer of the skiffle in England was a musician named Lonnie Donegan, and he, unlike the rest, remained faithful to the skiffle until his death in 2002 [1].

In 1963 the single “I Want to hold your hand” was released and it suddenly took off to the top of the charts.

*Oh yeah, I'll tell you something  
I think you'll understand  
Then I'll say that **something***

*I wanna hold your hand  
I wanna hold your hand  
I wanna hold your hand*

(The Beatles – “I want to hold your hand”)

Here, you should pay attention to two things. First, the second “something” is just a colloquial interjection that can be translated like this: «Я говорю, что, это, я хочу подержать тебя за руку» It's a small thing, but it works: it brings the text closer to the youth audience [2, 77-103].

If “The Beatles” is the British rock band number one, then, of course, “The Rolling Stones” go after it. They consciously built their image on the contrast: “The Beatles” were “good boys” with melodic songs, lapping on stage in suits with ties, “The Rolling Stones” played tougher music, wore long hair and absurd clothes, behaved on the stage “as animals”, the main characteristic features of their songs were drive, style of behavior, even lifestyle [2, 103-119].

Many bands, which are considered part of the “British invasion”, briefly stayed in the history of rock music (for example, “Gerry and the Pacemakers”, “The Dave Clark Five”, “Manfred Mann” and “The Searchers” remained the authors of one hit). “The Kinks” also began as a bit-group and also managed to stay in history. They are sometimes called “the most distinctly English” from the English bit groups of the 60s: five-o’clock tea, London fog, royal races, evening gatherings in the pub, a little absurdity and specific British humor in the spirit of “Alice in Wonderland” – everything that you associate with England will surely be found in their songs.

*The tax man's taken all my **dough**  
And left me in my **stately** home  
Lazing on a sunny afternoon  
And I can't sail my yacht  
He's taken everythin' I've got  
All I've got's this sunny afternoon*  
(The Kinks – «Sunny Afternoon»)

Pay attention to the combination of slang and rather high-sounding words in the same sentence. This is how the Kinks emphasize their “Britishness”. The same technique, by the way, formed the basis of the name of the group “The Kinks”. The participants mixed 2 words: pathos “kings” + slang “kinky”.

In the mid 60s psychedelic rock appeared and new groups arose – “Pink Floyd”, “Soft Machine”, “The Moody Blues” - which were characterized by non-standard harmony and unusual instruments, for example wind or string. As a result of psychedelic experiments, several new styles with the prefix “-rock” were formed, which determined the development of rock music in the 1970s. One of them is hard rock. The main representatives and actual founders of the genre were the groups “Led Zeppelin”, “Deep Purple” and “Black Sabbath”. One of the main melodic techniques of hard rock is the technique

of riffs, that is, short repeated guitar parts. Lyrics also changed, far different images replaced radiant metaphors of the early 1960s [3, 17-18].

*Generals gathered in their masses  
Just like witches at black masses  
Evil minds that plot destruction  
Sorcerers of death's construction  
In the fields the bodies burning  
As the war machine keeps turning  
Death and hatred to mankind  
Poisoning their brainwashed minds  
Oh, Lord, yeah!*  
(Black Sabbath – “War Pigs”)

In addition to the general mood of the song, shockingly different from what rock musicians were singing all over the place five years before, it is worth noting the mocking rhymes: tautological masses (массы) – masses (мессы, темные ритуалы) and close to that "destruction – construction".

In the second half of the 1970s, rock music had a turning point: the main techniques of hard rock and progressive rock were exhausted, many famous bands broke up, others are finally commercialized. By the end of the 1970s, the world was captured by disco, and almost simultaneously in England and the United States, punk appeared – music of deliberate simplification of rock standards, refusal of the complexity of prog-rock, attempts to find energy that is not yet spoiled by the power of money. Among English punk rock bands “Sex Pistols” and “The Clash” are worth mentioning [4].

*Right  
Now  
Ha ha ha ha ha...  
I am an anti-Christ  
I am an anarchist  
Don't know what I want  
But I know how to get it  
I wanna destroy the passerby  
'Cause I wanna be anarchy  
No dogsbody*  
(Sex Pistols – “Anarchy in the UK”)

Very short lines, almost no rhymes and a huge amount of aggressive energy-this is how the standard of a punk song looks to this day.

By the 1980s, punk, disco and fragments of rock music bred a new wave, postpunk and alternative rock. Simply put, this new wave was punk that became pop music. In the UK it was represented by the bands “The Police”, “The Pretenders”, Elvis Costello. Postpunk was, on the contrary, something like an avant-garde punk with very cold melodies and humanistic texts, represented by “Joy Division”, “Bauhaus”, “The Cure”, “Throbbing Gristle”, “Cabaret Voltaire”, “The Fall”.

*F-I-are-E-I-N-see-A-I-are-O*  
*F-I-are-E-I-N-see-A-I-are-O*  
*F-I-are-E-I-N-see-A-I-are-O*  
*Then the heat disappears*  
*And the mirage*  
*Fades away*  
(The Cure – “Fire in Ciaro”)

This song has one of the most amazing choruses in the history of rock music: it's just three words – “fire in Cairo” – spelled out and forming a powerful glossolalic nonsense.

By the end of the century, British rock was in crisis, not for the first time in its history. Answers were again found in the past: the so-called indie rock of the early 2000s again tried to leave one or two guitars in rock bands, simple drums and return to the roots of the early 1960s.

While making this study of the British rock-music I conducted a survey among 23 students about the benefits of British rock in learning English. The average age of respondents is 18 years. All these respondents study at the BSU, they are freshmen. 100 per cent of respondents' profession is connected with the study of foreign languages. 95,7 per cent of them listen to foreign music and only half listen to British Rock. Most respondents like “Queen”, “Coldplay”, “Arctic Monkeys”, “Pink Floyd” and “Led Zeppelin”. 47,8 per cent often understand the lyrics of songs by ear, 30,7 – at times, only 17,4 – immediately understand the lyrics. More than half of the students sometimes take apart the lyrics (find interesting expressions, various phonetics or grammatical techniques etc.) As for vocabulary, 56,5 per cent of the respondents voted for “it's easier learning English words in songs than in English classes”. The majority or 87 per cent would like to focus not only on traditional foreign language learning, but also on music learning.

So, how does rock music help you to learn English?

1. We constantly hear music in different languages, thanks to music we all know a certain number of words and expressions in several languages. Music gives you an opportunity to learn about another language, love it, and want to learn it.

2. Listening to music, we create the atmosphere of culture of other people around us, music becomes a means of immersion in the atmosphere of the language.

3. Targeted foreign language classes require attention and concentration, and your favorite music helps you learn the language while relaxing.

4. Students have the opportunity to listen to music almost everywhere, while passively learning a foreign language when other methods (reading books, watching a movie, performing oral or written exercises) cannot be used. Music acts as a universal tool available to everyone and everywhere.

5. Music develops not only musical, but also phonetic hearing. Since the language is not only words and grammar, but also pronunciation, rhythm and intonation, in this respect songs help to remember them at the level of associative memory.

6. In songs, you can hear new words, fixed expressions that are useful in certain life situations, ready-made phrases and constructions that are often remembered automatically and can be used in real speech. From modern music, you can learn colloquial and slang vocabulary that is not given in textbooks. The theme and content of the songs are also close to the problems of modern youth, and the lyrics themselves act as authentic linguistic material.

7. It is well known that one of the main reasons for failures in learning a foreign language is low motivation to study, which is characterized by the lack of interest in educational material. Listening to songs motivates you to learn a foreign language.

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions:

- The possibilities of using English-language rock songs to increase interest in learning English are very large.
- Rock music like any other music is an art that we encounter almost daily, it is accessible and easy to use technically.
- English-language rock music compositions are a good example of using the language as the main means of intercultural communication of the XXI century.
- You can and should learn foreign languages using music.
- A song as a piece of music is a work of art of a certain country and culture and contains in addition to linguistic, cultural, and social material.

Music brings people together all over the world, English-language rock compositions have become not just a musical property of a country, but a global sociolinguistic phenomenon. As one saying has it: “Listen to music, read books, learn languages, and there hardly will be a person more erudite than you.”

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