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INTRODUCTION

Learning and music have enjoyed a long and intimate connection. Ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers viewed music as a vital educational tool; medieval poets sang their verses and, more recently, language teachers have used approaches from Suggestopedia to jazz chants. Teachers have seemed to intuit that music can facilitate language learning, and now new research in neuroscience provides scientifically based confirmation for some of these intuitions and may support a more consistent use of music in the classroom. In fact, some theorists propose that language is one kind of music and that, at least for human infants, musical cognition is the foundation for language learning (Brandt, Gebrain, & Slevc, 2012).

Increasing numbers of recent studies from Australia, Europe, Japan, and the United States suggest a link between how the brain processes language and music. Both language and music require processing syntax (musical and grammatical structures) and both require remembering seemingly random items (vocabulary and sequences of notes; Miranda & Ullman, 2007). Neuroimaging and behavioral studies have shown the brain uses the same structures to process both musical and linguistic rules or syntax (Fiveash & Pammer, 2014; Levitin & Menon, 2003; Patel, 2003). In addition, investigations into brain wave patterns have shown that a second region of the brain is used for memorization of both linguistic and musical information (Miranda & Ullman, 2007).

More specifically, additional studies suggest a link between music and grammar (Gordon et al., 2015); music and vocabulary (De Groot, 2006; Legg, 2009; Ludke, Ferreira, & Overy, 2014); music and reading (Slater et al., 2014; Zeromskaite, 2014); and music and phonology, listening, speech, and pronunciation (Chobert & Besson, 2013; Slevc, 2012; Tanaka & Nakamura, 2004). It’s no wonder that, when it comes to language learning, as Lems (2005, p. 13) wrote, “Music works.”

Using music, especially music that is chosen in collaboration with students, invigorates both students and teacher. It can reduce the fear factor, increase interest and participation, and create fun. Music can decrease students’ anxiety levels while increasing motivation and retention (Cunningham, 2014; Dolean, 2015; Speh & Ahramjian, 2011). When students are engaged, their creative juices flow, they become more receptive, and learning becomes more memorable, whether the instructional goal is grammar or cultural understanding.

Music can be included in all curricular areas, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and cultural exploration. Listening to music sharpens students’ ability to identify sounds, words, and suprasegmental patterns, which can in turn be applied in speaking. Reading about composers, artists, and genres can generate extended activities, and writing assignments can follow from this. Music lyrics provide authentic texts for grammatical analysis and vocabulary acquisition. Because music is an expression of culture, it provides a window to understanding the target language and its culture. Finally, music can be used as a tool to integrate many language skills in one lesson.

Each of the following areas constitutes one section of New Ways in Teaching with Music: reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary, cultural exploration, and integrated skills. The lessons are a sampling of how music is used in the English
language classroom by teachers in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, New Zealand, and North and South America—every continent except Antarctica is represented. The 87 contributors include not only full-time teachers, but also musicians; students; writers; administrators; producers (of both film and music); and, finally, a journalist, a photographer, and a poet. The types of music they use for teaching are equally as diverse: from nursery rhymes to opera, from classical to hip hop, and from national anthems to pop. We offer all of the contributors our most sincere thanks for their creativity, expertise, and generosity in sharing their work.

In a review of the literature on using music for learning the English language, Engh (2013) reports that there is not much written about how music is actually being used in the English language classroom, despite his conclusion that “From an educational standpoint, music and language not only can, but should be studied together” (p. 121). New Ways in Teaching with Music offers you 101 different ways that you can incorporate music into your language classroom. Additionally, we hope that you will visit our companion website, www.tesol.org/teachingwithmusic. You will find short biographies of our contributors; a bibliography of articles, books, and recent theses and dissertations that are related to music and language learning; an annotated list of websites helpful for classroom teachers who want to integrate music in their classrooms; MP3s; PowerPoint presentations; and other material mentioned in this book.

When you see this icon, go to www.tesol.org/teachingwithmusic to access these valuable resources.

Each of the activities in this book lists the level of proficiency for which the activity is best suited, the activity’s aims, time required for preparation and in class, and materials needed. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you make your way through this book:

- Only you know your students and your context: Please preview all songs and videos before using them in class to see if they are appropriate for your students. Note that you can always mute a video and play only the audio version if the images in a video aren’t suitable for your group.
- We know that the materials and resources available to each educator vary; however, for the sake of simplicity, the activities in this book assume that all teachers have access to a blackboard or whiteboard, paper and writing utensils, and audio equipment.

We have used music first as language learners and now as language teachers. We are happy to compile this book of the best ideas and resources from practicing teachers about how they use music in their English language teaching, and we hope you’ll enjoy trying some of these creative techniques.
REFERENCES


**FURTHER READING**


