

Teaching English Vocabulary using Song

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is one of the English elements besides grammar, spelling, and pronunciation supporting English language skill such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is the first element that should be master before the learners going to other element. When the learners have mastered vocabulary, they will be able to produce many sentences in spoken and written form easily. On the other hand, when they lack of vocabulary, they will find difficulty in deliver their thought, even their opinion to other people. One of the teaching strategies to enhance students' vocabulary is using English Song. This paper aims at describing the use of English song in teaching English vocabulary for students. The method of this research was a qualitative research combination of seven several journals from abroad and within the country about teaching vocabulary with song. Although there are many reasons why songs can be considered a valuable teaching tool, there are some issues to consider.

Keywords: teaching vocabulary, song.

I. INTRODUCTION

Songs are not something new in the teaching and learning process. The tone of music or songs is often used in the process of study, especially when the students do the assignment (Levy, 2000; DePoter, 1999; Schmid 1999 in Dryden, 2000) in Puasa (2008:5). Some songs can convince and stimulate brain work during learning process. Furthermore, in teaching a foreign language, especially English, songs can be beneficial in the teaching of skills as well as language aspects (Lems, 2001; Puasa, 2003). The teaching using songs is very fun because the suggestions of music and songs can bring the students into the rest, relax and free from under-pressure

environments as stated in Sumardi (1992) in Puasa (2008:5).

Research on psycholinguistics reveals that songs can activate language acquisition and learn in both hemispheres of the human brain (Carroll, 2000; Larsen-freeman & Long, 2000, Williams & Burden, 1997). Gardner (1985) in his history of multiple intelligences claims that all human beings have musical intelligence and that the use of music is very positive in language learning because it can open an opportunity for learners who have a strong right-brain orientation. Guglielmino (1986) states that "songs bridge the (brain's) hemispheres strengthening, retention through a complementary function as

the right hemisphere learns the melody, the left the words" (p. 20). Anton (1990) found that "when a learning activity combines both left and right hemispheres simultaneously engaged in a particular activity, an ideal learning situation is established and the most productive learning occurs" (p. 1170).

In the 2013 Curriculum applied in Indonesia, the government provides a book for students and teachers' book is used to guide teaching activity in Junior High School. In the student's book for the seventh grade, it is completed by song lyrics in each chapter. Song lyrics in each chapter make the student interested in learning English. The correlated song lyrics and vocabulary bring an advantage in teaching English.

According to Griffiee (1992: 5), songs are good at introducing vocabulary because a song provides a meaningful context for vocabulary. Krashen (1981) in Fauziati (2010: 61) states that it is undeniable that most learners' vocabulary grows through incidental learning, such as through continuous exposure to comprehend language in listening, speaking, reading and writing exercise.

One of the advantages of using song lyrics in teaching language is flexibility. The song can be used for several purposes and there are many reasons why songs can be considered valuable for teaching. According to Murphey (1992) in Millington (2011:134) states that songs can help the learner to improve their listening

skill and pronunciation, therefore potentially helping them to improve their speaking skill.

Although there are many reasons why songs can be considered a valuable teaching tool, there are some issues to consider. Teacher needs to take care in selecting a suitable song for his or her class. The language, vocabulary, and sentence structure of some songs can be quite different from those used in spoken English (Richards, 1969, p. 163). Finally, Murphey (1992) points out that no matter how enjoyable or memorable, singing songs in itself will not teach anyone to use the language, and will not give students the ability to communicate in another language. The words in songs, unfortunately, do not transfer into use.

Furthermore, there are some less positive concerns about music and songs teachers should regard in the language classroom. Murphey (1992: 8-9) writes that loudly playing songs may disturb neighbouring classes. Secondly, some learners get too excited and may forget about the discipline. Another issue is the fact some students may disagree about musical pieces and they have dissimilar musical tastes. Teachers often complain that the learners just want to listen, not work. More importantly, many songs may be intelligible for students since they contain many colloquial expressions and the pace is too fast. Siek-Piskozub and Wach (2006: 91-97) add that there are songs that touch taboo topics like violence and sexism and thus such

songs may confuse the learners or embarrass them.

Concerning the problem formulated above, the objective of the research was to describe the use of song in teaching English vocabulary for students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Based on Wilkins (1972), without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. Vocabulary is the basic element of language which will make the language meaningful. Learning a language cannot be separated from learning vocabulary because vocabulary consists of much vocabulary which makes up the language, it is one of the important things that should be mastered by the students. By mastering vocabulary the students are able to communicate in a certain language, including English, both oral and written, the students are still able to communicate although other components are still needed.

2.2 Teaching vocabulary

Nation (2008: 5) state "teaching vocabulary is among the least important of a teacher's job". In this case, teachers teach the students to know the meaning of the words based on the context. There are several reasons for this. First, there are many

words that learner needs to know. Second, learning words is a cumulative process that requires meeting words. Thirds, teaching words need to be limited in scope. Finally knowing words well involves knowing a range of an aspect of the word, including the meaning, form, and use. Schmitt (2000: 145) mentioned that "explicit and incidental approaches are both necessary in the course of learning vocabulary, each with its own strengths and weaknesses".

Graves (1987) cited in Schmitt (2000: 157) states that "highlights the multiplicity of vocabulary learning, distinguishing six types: (1) learning to read known words, (2) learning new meaning senses for known words, (3) learning new words representing known concepts, (4) learning new words representing new concepts, (5) clarifying and enriching the meanings of known words, and (6) moving words from receptive to productive vocabularies".

2.3 Song

According to Richard (2002), a song is a relatively short musical composition for the human voice, which features words or lyrics. Sometimes it has rhymes and uses a language style that is different from the language style which is used in a scientific or formal text. The words within a song are sung in particular tones, rhythms, speed, and style.

Kamien (1997) stated that song is a relatively short musical composition for the human voice that

is possibly accompanied by another musical instrument that features words or lyrics.

III. METHOD

This journal contains a combination of seven several journals including those from abroad and within the country about teaching vocabulary with song. Among them are derived from Poland with the title *The Role Of Music And Songs In Teaching English Vocabulary To Students*, Iran with the title *The Effect Of Songs On Vocabulary Retention Of Preschool Young English Language Learners*, Iran with the title *The Relationship between English Songs and Learning Vocabulary*, Japan with the title *Using Songs Effectively to Teach English to Young Learners*, Bandar Lampung with the title *The Implementation Of English Song In Teaching Vocabulary At The First Grade Of Senior High School*, Surakarta with the title *The Use Of Song Lyrics For Teaching Vocabulary At Smp Amal Mulya Tawangmangu In 2014/2015 Academic Year*, and Surakarta with the title *The Effectiveness Of Song Lyrics To Teach Student's Vocabulary (An Experimental Research) For First Grade Student Of Man Sukoharjo In The Academic Year Of 2016/2017*.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Song as a task

One way to maximize the advantages and minimize some of the limitations mentioned above might be to develop songs into language learning tasks. Although this alone

will not help teachers develop a greater repertoire of songs, it can help turn a song into a useful tool for language learning and teaching (Cameron, 2001, p. 31).

Cameron defines an activity for young learners as “any kind of event that children participate in” (2001, p. 31), but adds, not all classroom activities can be classified as tasks. For an activity to be considered a task, it must have more carefully planned and structured events with learner participation as the fulcrum (Cameron, 1997, p. 346). Cameron provides “a list of defining features of the task for use in teaching foreign languages to children” (2001, p. 31). Classroom tasks for children learning a foreign language

- 1) Have coherence and unity for learners (From topic, activity, and outcome)
- 2) Have meaning and purpose for learners
- 3) Have clear language learning goals
- 4) Have a beginning and an end
- 5) Involve the learners actively

These defining features benefit the teacher because they provide a reference point when planning a lesson or analysing a lesson plan; for researchers, it “provides a unit around which to develop an understanding of language learning and teaching processes” (Cameron, 1997, p.346).

4.2 Song selection

There are no strict rules that the teachers should obey when selecting a song for a language work to their students, but there are several factors that the teacher should take into consideration. Griffiee (1992: 6-8) categorizes the criteria into four groups: the class, the teacher, classroom opportunities and music.

The teachers should take account of students' age. Young learners may not be able to understand songs that contain deep ideas like envy, suffering or forgiveness. Besides, each age group has its own musical favorites and disfavored ones. Some learners are tired in the evening and music might energize them, while other classes may need to have their energy disciplined a bit more (Griffiee 1992: 6-7).

In Addition, it is unwise to use music that the teacher and the learners do not like. It may be a good idea to let the students bring the lyrics of songs they like and then choose appropriate ones. It is worth remembering that "you can use songs and music when the curriculum has been predetermined, but there is time remaining in the class period" (Griffiee 1992: 7). The teachers claim that usually, they use songs for special holiday lessons like Christmas or Easter lessons. The crucial thing is also language teaching purposes. The song should have instructional value, it should not be just for fun. The situation is satisfactory when the selected song is a direct component to

the lesson, thus contains, for example, a practiced grammatical structure or a discussion theme that can be used in a lesson. Finally, music may disturb other classes, so it should not be played loudly. There are some rooms which are large and seem to eat up sound, thus choosing an appropriate classroom should be taken into consideration (Griffiee 1992: 7-8).

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has the purpose of how the use of song in teaching vocabulary can be answered by giving the learning task and the song selection. Songs can be used as a valuable teaching and learning tool. Using songs as tasks might be one way of helping transfer words from songs into use, and maximize the potential of songs as teaching and learning tools.

Songs have also found a niche in English classrooms. Nowadays, foreign language teachers find using songs and music is beneficial, because songs are perceived as motivating sources, thus beneficial in language learning. The benefit of teaching and learning via songs is it can enrich students' English vocabulary. Teachers play a meaningful role while teaching vocabulary. They help their students expand and improve, and build new stock of words to choose from. Songs allow for interesting changes in the classroom, thus energizes learning activities. Since people find listening to songs as a good technique for learning a foreign language, especially English, thus in

order to know what a song is about, they read and translate lyrics on their own. Additionally, many words in songs are repetitive and this makes them stay in mind. Hence, learning through songs may be a good method of vocabulary memorization because lyrics are sung repeatedly and catchy tunes help to remember them.

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