

Boom Chicka Boom!

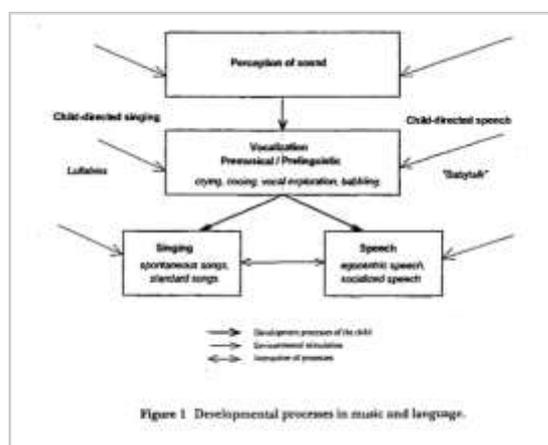
Using songs and chants in the YL classroom

Kylie Malinowska

Literature is full of references to the efficacy of music as a tool for both first and second language acquisition, but are songs and chants utilized as much as they could be in the second language learning classroom? I've loved singing and music for as long as I can remember, and been interested in using them in the classroom since I stepped foot in one.

Introduction: How do you feel about using songs in the YL Classroom?

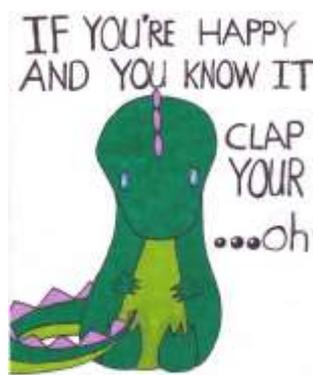
YL coursebooks are full of songs and chants. And why not? Using songs and chants as a pedagogical tool to teach children language is a natural and logical choice. Singing is a natural and popular medium for both parent and child and by the time children come to us in the second language learning classroom, they are often already equipped with a catalogue of songs, chants, and rhymes. Children live in musical worlds. In fact, according to research, babies as early as in the womb pay more attention to singing than speaking and it's suggested that from very early ages there is little distinction between singing and speech.



'From birth babies listen to and produce sound without any distinction between music and language, singing and speech.'

Above quote and Figure 1. Developmental process in music and language are taken from: CHEN-HAFTECK, Lily (1997). Music and language development in early childhood: Integrating past research in the two domains. *Early child development and care*, 130 (1), 86. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0300443971300109>

Are you happy to sing? Why? Why not?



According to Trinick (2012), Lee believes songs are not being used as much as they should be in the classroom and suggests the root may be that they are viewed purely as entertainment, or that teachers lack understanding into the theoretical underpinnings or application and methodology. Could it be as Carless and Douglas (2011) surmise that the significance of the ubiquity of songs goes unnoticed? Trinick (2012) concurs and cites Tracey, 'there is a tendency to overlook familiar, everyday materials and resources'. As Rogers (no date) attests, literature 'abounds with positive statements regarding the efficacy of music as a vehicle for first and second language acquisition'.

Indeed countless resource books for teachers, coursebooks, TESOL websites and blogs proffer advice, activities and encouragement*.

*See below for a list of resources that can be found with a quick look on google

So how about you? Are you ruling the TEFL world Beyonce style in your classroom? Or are you pressing play on the CD and hoping for the best?

Maybe you do want to sing in class, and it's not that you're afraid to, but you just:

- can't be bothered
- don't have time (you do one at the end of the lesson if you need to fill in time)
- aren't sure what songs to sing
- aren't sure how to sing the songs
- aren't sure how to teach the songs
- have never done it before
- hate the songs in the coursebooks
- would rather teach grammar and other important things
- **are actually a T-rex and therefore can't sing. Or clap.**

The body parts game

A fun game to practice vocabulary, or in the case of a conference session, break down some barriers and feel a little more confident singing in front of the person next to you. I first saw this done by Jessica Toro from International House Zaragoza.

- Find a partner
- Teacher/presenter calls out a body part e.g. thumbs. Pairs must touch thumbs etc.

Musical mingle

Playing music can help relax students when speaking and also give a non-verbal prompt for an action e.g. find a new partner.

- Give instructions (find a partner when the music starts and discuss.....)
- Press play (participants/students find a partner and discuss the questions given)
- Press stop (participants stop talking and find a new partner)
- Press play (students discuss questions with a new partner)
- Continue.....

Hello

You'd be hard pressed to find a TEYL teacher who didn't know at least one hello song or a song to sing for a welcome routine at the start of a lesson. One of my favourites is the Hello song from OUP's Cookie and Friends series.



Sing and do the actions

Hello	- wave
Everyone	- hold arms out to the side
Tra-la-la-la-la	- dance

Hello Song

(Adapted from OUP's *Cookie and Friends* series to the tune of 'Broom Girl in the Ring')

**Hello everyone , tra la-la la-la.
 Hello everyone tra la la-la la-la.
 Hello everyone tra la-la la-la.
 Hello everyone!**

A good hello song will be:

- Memorable
- Easy to learn
- Simple words and melody
- Repetitive
- Have actions
- Adaptable
- Fun

The multidimensionality of songs make them perfect for TEYL

Since Jolly (1975), but in particular since the early 1990's, literature has indicated an increasing awareness of the deliberate and purposeful use of song. Despite this, there are only a handful of academic papers directly discussing using songs to English to young language learners. A surprising revelation when you consider the ubiquity of songs in course books, the importance the young spectrum of this age group place on knowing words, and that songs, when you consider how much they are enjoyed, resemble life outside the classroom and contextualise vocabulary, have such a natural and authentic learning potential. The multidimensionality of songs make them a perfect medium for not only teaching vocabulary, grammar, functions etc. but also for managing the YL classroom.

'Children love rhythm, music and movement, and it is widely recognised that the use of rhymes, chants and songs contribute to young children's overall social, linguistic, physical, cognitive and emotional development. When starting to learn a foreign language, rhymes, chants and songs play a special role in drawing children into producing language in ways which are natural, spontaneous and enjoyable. As well as enhancing children's learning and acquisition of language, the use of rhymes chants and songs promotes the development of positive attitudes and motivation towards learning a foreign language in both immediate and longer term. Give their many potential benefits for learning, there is a strong case for making rhymes, chants and songs a fully integrated component of any programme to learn English.'

(Read 2007)





A Historical perspective

From early beginnings, songs have been highly valued as a powerful and significant medium for both communication and enhancing social harmony. The Yolngu (Aboriginal Australians) believe the world was sung into existence. Anthropologists, such as Livingstone and Mithen believe song evolved before speech. Heavily rooted in ancient tribal traditions, indigenous communities from Thailand, Africa and the Americas have a long history of using songs to invoke spirits, pass down genealogies and narratives, and mark important occasions. Throughout the ancient world, music was recognised as having a therapeutic or magical purpose.

'Music finds its way to the soul'

Plato

From ancient times to the middle ages, and even in more modern times, rhythmic battle cries and war chants have been used to invoke sentiments or intimidate the enemy. During WWII, with the influx of radio ownership, music, song and wartime classics like 'Bless 'em all' and 'We'll meet again' played an important role in boosting soldier morale, reassuring those back home and of course spreading propaganda.

There are records of lullabies being sung worldwide since the dawn of time and some of today's English nursery rhymes, particularly the macabre narratives, date back to medieval times and serve as a history of what was then no doubt a much scarier time to be a child.

Anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists and ethnomusicologists, just to name a few, have long been interested in studying the features, relevance and sub-culture of child-song, but it is only more recently, that those in the field of second language learning have taken a more vested interest.

Development of the ideologies

In the last century, the field of second language learning has seen a multitude of approaches and methodologies, each of which has both led to acquisition and been valuable in its contributions to current thought and practice. Summarising key literature, elements attributable to the success of using songs to teach English include:

- **Context:** Whilst it is unlikely grammar translation enthusiasts in the late 19th century sang, given that oral work was kept to a minimum, as the preference was to analyse vocabulary syntax, the grammar translation method did present language in context and focussed learners of large chunks of language.
- **Repetition:** Oral-based Audio lingual and behaviourist approaches, which often used music to alleviate boredom, focussed on repetition and drills, habit formation and reinforcement. Guiding principles include beliefs such as: language is best learnt if presented in spoken form first before learners see it written; analogy is more fruitful than analysis; and recognising the importance of linguistic, social and cultural context.
- **Psycholinguistic and cognitive theory:** Parallel to the aforementioned approaches grew naturalistic principles and the notion and era of 'methods' (Richards and Rodgers 2001). A feature of methods which arose from the learning theories akin to Krashen's monitor model (1981) is the primacy of process and conditions over language. Gattegno's silent way (1972) focussed on creating the necessary conditions for learning. As did Asher's TPR movement (1982), which draws on the work

of Piaget and cognitive theory in regards to active involvement in language. The technique was mostly born from Asher's acknowledgement that children listen and respond with physical movements long before they speak. In Lozanov's Suggestopedia (1978), learners 'experience' language in meaningful texts and music plays a central role in relaxing learners. Although we can still see characteristics of these 'Designer Methods' (Ebong 2004, p9) today, particularly in communicative approaches, they were quite limiting, and as such drew criticism and lost favour.

Memory

Songs help create new pathways and deep traces in memory. Even more so when combined with actions, as the repetition and parallelism is something they like, and instrumental to memory.

Natural

Anyone who has spent time with a 2-7 yr old will know they make up their own little rhymes, songs and chants and love singing songs they know in any language. Songs are a common, social experience shared by all cultures and a familiar activity. If we look at early childhood development theory, we know that VYL like to be actively involved in their learning. Songs and chants help them achieve this.

Beneficial

It's not just a child's language experience that becomes enriched by song. Of course songs and chants provide a great opportunity to practice language, play around and experiment safely with pronunciation, present language in a different context, create an acquisition rich environment etc., but it's not just the linguistic value that is beneficial to the child. Use of songs, music, chants, rhythm and chanting in the VYL classroom addresses the whole child. The breath, voice and neck muscles all benefit from the use of song and chants in the classroom. Accompanying actions help with mind body coordination. The list goes on.

Everyone is happy

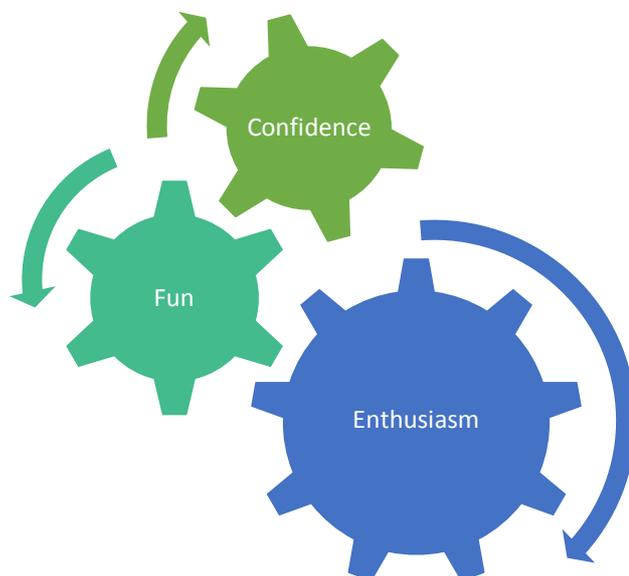
Whilst the actual learning of the song (i.e. the VYL following your instructions) is probably what really counts, parents don't always see or understand this. They want to see their child shine and love to hear and see their child proudly singing a song in English. The children themselves are equally proud, and love to show mum and dad and grandma and the neighbour and the shopkeeper and anyone else who will listen that they can sing a song in English. As well as confidence boosting for the student and reassuring for the parents (to know they've spent their money well), did you realise that it actually makes you, the teacher, happy too? Singing songs can release endorphins, fill your lungs with more oxygen, and make you feel energised and generally happier. Not to mention the fact songs and chants provide you with limitless opportunities to present and practice almost any language or topic in a fun and memorable way. It's a win-win situation for everyone!

Malinowska, 2013



How to use a song

It's all about confidence, enthusiasm and having fun.



Songs and chants are perfect for the YL classroom as they present language in a fun and memorable way and allow our students to experiment with the sounds of English. Many teachers, however, despite being fully aware of the potential of songs and chants fall a little short because they lack the confidence to pull it off in the classroom. Confidence and enthusiasm is key. Students need to know the teacher feels good about the song in order for them to. It really doesn't matter if you're a little off key and no Mariah Carey. Chances are your students won't notice or will feel more comfortable knowing you are normal just like them. What will stop your students joining in is if they see you aren't 100% comfortable. It's fine to have a CD player for back up. But don't rely on it, and whatever you do don't stand at the front of the class lip syncing and conducting (but not actually singing) expecting them to do all the work. If you are enthusiastic and singing along you are more likely to get them to join in.

For many this is easier said than done both for you and your students.

Silly Voices

Using silly voices can calm the nerves and also helps our students experiment with the sounds of English. Sing like 'mummy' like 'daddy' like a 'monster'. Or better still, get them to imitate the teacher or another person they know they speaks English like their Uncle Bob or Michael Jackson, Lady Gaga, Beyonce....

Puppets

Another way to calm yours or your student's nerves is to use puppets or soft toys. Then it's not you who's singing out of tune and forgetting the words it's you alter ego in your hand. Finger puppets work a treat!



If you want to know more about puppets (or anything YL actually) Juan Uribe is the puppet master and his blog is a fantastic resource of YL teachers.

childrenlearningenglishaffectively.blogspot.com

Names

All kids love to hear their names. Especially in a song.

Telephone song

Hey _____!
I think I hear my name.
Hey _____!
I think I hear it again.
You're wanted on the
telephone.
Well if it isn't _____
I'm not home!

I find that when I first do this song with students they look to the ground with a look on their face that says 'not me not me not me' But it's only because they don't yet know the tune. Once they get it, everyone wants a go and they never want it to stop. I've done this with 5 yr olds to 15 yr olds and all loved it once they knew it in the right context).

http://www.eastersealscamps.ca/songs?action=show_songs&songid=45

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEVbGuTtnkA>

Boom chicka Boom

This is an old camp song that creates a fun group atmosphere and feeling of belonging. As a bonus for second language learners a song with limited lyrics and an easy tune can help students to play around with the sounds of English. I particularly love this one as they get to be silly with it. It can be a lot of fun. Don't underestimate how hard it can be to make English sounds. Give your students lots of opportunities to have fun with sounds and experimenting with stress and intonation. Getting rid of unknown vocabulary and grammar can help with that. Of course if your students really love this song and want to play with it some more they could write their own lyrics :D



Teacher: I said a Boom Chicka Boom
Students: *I said a Boom Chicka Boom*

Teacher: I said a Boom Chicka Boom
Students: *I said a Boom Chicka Boom*

Teacher: I said a Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom
Students: *I said a Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom*

Teacher: Uh huh
Students: *Uh huh*

Teacher: Oh Yeah
Students: *Oh yeah*

Everyone: One more time _____ style*

*Happy style, sad style, laughing style, angry style, mummy style, daddy style, baby style, Gaga style, robot style, hip hop style, monster style, country and western style, opera style, Gangnam style, Michael Jackson style, Elvis style, crazy style, ghost style, vampire style, Frozen style, mickey mouse style, snail style, cow style, grandma style.....the list is only limited to yours and your students imaginations. Let them decide on a 'style'.

You know those coursebook songs? The ones you can never remember the tune to without the CD and are sometimes really boring because they are so obviously trying to practice a particular piece of grammar or vocab and it just sounds weird? Why not let the student make up the tune and like Boom chicka boom the class follows and chooses their own style. What 8 yr old doesn't love singing a song zombie style? You'll be giving your students the opportunity to play around with the sounds and with any luck notice some of the language too. Especially if you talk to them about what words a monster or zombie might stress and why. Or maybe get them to adapt the words so that it suits a zombie song better?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2XVfTzel8E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCCC7iTUNvc>

Apples and Bananas

I love it when kids make pronunciation mistakes on purpose. It helps them distinguish between sounds and work out what is right. I love the way this song allows kids to play and experiment with sounds and feel the way their mouth changes for different the vowel sounds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKEUAzzn-Ig>

<http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/a008.html>

YL learn through direct experiences via the five senses.

Combining singing and TPR encourages cognitive development via concentration and coordination.

What's more, the repetition and parallelism is something they like and is instrumental to memory.

Malinowska, 2008

I'm sure you all know the old favourite 'Head shoulders knees and toes'. This song works like a charm because YL learn through direct experiences via the five senses. This combination of singing and TPR (total physical response) encourages cognitive development via concentration and coordination. What's more, the repetition and parallelism is something they like and is instrumental to memory. I like to mix up this old favourite by slowing it right down then speeding it up with each repetition. How do you adapt your favourite songs? Miss out words? Change the words?

Often we use songs and chants because we want to practice language and or present it in a different context. It's not always easy to find the right song or chant to match the language your students need to practice, so why not let them create the song/ chant?



Jazz Chants

Often we use songs and chants because we want to practice language and or present it in a different context. It's not always easy to find the right song or chant to match the language your students need to practice, so why not let them create the song/ chant?

A really really super duper easy way for your students to create their own music is with a Jazz Chant ala Carolyn Graham.

Think of a topic. Any topic. Food? Sport? Music? Teaching?

Brainstorm a vocab list for that topic. List as many words as you can.

Count the number of syllables in each word and write that number next to the word e.g. 1 next to pear, 2 next to apple, 3 next to banana. It's that easy! Now all you do is follow the formula. If you are familiar with Carolyn Graham's Jazz Chants then you'll recognise this formula. Although Carolyn's Jazz Chant books were released many years ago they are still just as great today and are in fact timeless in my opinion.

2 3 1
2 3 1
2 3 2 3
2 3 1

e.g.

Apple, banana pear.

Apple, banana, pear.

Apple, banana, apple, banana.

Apple, banana, pear.

I do, however make a small change. Jazz hands. Maybe it's just me? But I feel that without some jazz hands at the end it's just a chant :D

Vocabulary and intonation practice

A	B
What is it?	It's a _____.
A what?	A _____!
A _____?	Yes! A _____.
Oh, a _____.	



Classroom management

Using popular tunes that the kids already know helps them to focus on other things.

I'm pretty sure all kids know the tune of Frere Jacques.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC6rvbxdywg>

Frère Jacques

(Canon)

Voix

Frè - re Jac - ques, Frè - re Jac - ques, Dor - mez -
vous? Dor - mez - vous? Son - nez les ma - ti - nes,
Son - nez les ma - ti - nes, Dig Ding Dong, Dig Ding Dong.

As my kids almost always know this tune. I like to use it for all manner of songs. E.g. a song to get their attention.....

Look and listen

Look and listen, Look and Listen (point to eyes then ears)

Shhhh Shhhhhh (finger to lips)

Keep singing the song, starting loudly then getting quieter and quieter until everyone is listening or joining in.

Flashcard guessing game song

Look and listen, Look and Listen (point to eyes then ears)

What is this? What is this? (hold out arms shrugging and point it flashcard)

Is it a.....(pause for a moment to scratch head and shrug) monkey?

Is it a monkey? (mime monkey)

Yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes, yes (nod and give the thumbs up)

Listen and draw songs

Quite often when kids are doing drawing dictation type activities, they don't want to stop drawing one thing to move onto another and the teacher wastes valuable time asking kids to stop or reminding them that a new instruction has been given. Songs act as a great 'timer' and give the fast finishers something to do (sing along!).

Set the first part of the task e.g. 'Draw 2 red apples'. Then start singing a song, any song e.g. the colours song from OUPs Cookie and Friends (to the tune of 10 green bottles) followed by a countdown.

Red, green, yellow, purple pink or blue?

Red, green, yellow, purple pink or blue?

What's your favourite colour, please tell me.

Is it red, green, yellow, purple pink or blue?

5,4,3,2,1 STOP!

When the learners hear 'stop!' they should put their pens down and hands on heads ready for the next instruction. If you choose a song they know well, they will know when it's almost time to stop colouring/drawing. Repeat for each instruction.

Team games

Quite often when you play team games, only a handful of people have a task. E.g. if you play a game where flashcards are scattered throughout the room and one person from each team needs to find a particular piece of vocabulary, the rest of the team is left standing and waiting. Or maybe cheering. If you're lucky. A song not only sets a time limit. It gives something for the other team mates to do.

Flashcard race

Mini flashcards are scattered throughout the room face down.

Teams have 3 seconds to choose a team name. 1 point given to best name.

First team to line up gets one point.

Teacher sings a song e.g. below.



Students listen and when they hear the key word the person at the front of the line runs around picking up as many FCs as they can picturing the word.
When the song stops they must stop.
1 point per mini FC. 1 point for best singing.

*I am hungry, I am hungry
(rub belly)*

*I want apples, I want apples
(mime ieating apples)*

*Yummy Yummy yummy, Yummy yummy yummy.
(rub belly and lick lips)*

*I like apples. I like apples.
(nod head and mime eating an apple)*

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 STOP!

Grammar chants

Songs and chants can practice all sorts of grammar and you can easily make them your own. Quite often teens think they are 'too old' to sing songs but with a bit of encouragement will join in a group chant.

I went to school yesterday.

I've been to school today.

I'll go to school tomorrow!

I go to school every day!

Train chant

From:

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/products/500-primary-classroom-activities/>

Ch Ch ch choo
Ch ch ch choo

Red and yellow
Red and yellow
Orange and green





Orange and green

Bluuuuueeee!

Bluuuuueeee!

Cooperative learning

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_learning

<http://www.co-operation.org/home/introduction-to-cooperative-learning/>

Dancing game

Elicit some verbs e.g. what did the learners do when they woke up

Play some music

Call out a child's name

The student must then choose an action e.g. brush my hair

All students copy the mine to the music

Repeat

You can read my 5 tips for using songs in my YL Column in the next issue of the IH Journal here

ihjournal.com

You can follow my blog or get copies of other handouts and powerpoint presentations here

Klokanomil.wordpress.com

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Useful resources for using Songs and Chants in the YL Classroom

Here are just a small number of resources that may be useful for you....

Books

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/products/500-primary-classroom-activities/>

https://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/teacher_development/primary_resource_books_for_teachers/9780194371957?cc=global&selLanguage=en

http://books.google.cz/books/about/Music_and_Song.html?id=QoVOAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y

<http://www.amazon.com/Primary-English-Teachers-Guide-Penguin/dp/0582447763>

<http://www.amazon.com/Jazz-Chants-Carolyn-Graham/dp/0195024079>

Training





**International
House**
World Organisation

http://ihworld.com/teachers/course-details/ih_certificate_young_learners_and_teenagers

http://ihworld.com/online-training/course/ih_certificate_in_teaching_very_young_learners

Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIzEz7wq17I13yuaU7Z-Wyw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AcjLtvBgM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGa3AqeqRy0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP-MbfHFUqs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR-l3QI2nE>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL274902FC5BDAAA30>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_nPUuPryCs

Websites

<http://carolread.wordpress.com/2010/04/26/j-is-for-jazz-chants/>

http://busyteacher.org/classroom_activities-listening/songs_and_lyrics/

<http://www.esl-lounge.com/songstop.php>

<http://www.funsongs.co.uk/>

<http://esl-kids.com/songs/songs.html>

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/eslefilesol.htm>

<http://www.tefltunes.com/grammarsongs.aspx>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/evab2001/using-songs-teach-english>

<http://jazzchants.net/>

<http://www.musicalenglishlessons.org/index-ex.htm>

