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## **The Role of Songs in English Language Teaching (ELT): An Introduction to Musical Pedagogy**

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## The Role of Songs in English Language Teaching (ELT): An Introduction to Musical Pedagogy

### Abstract

“If learners are interested, education happens” aptly espoused by Sugata Mitra. Taking from his notion of entertainment, one loves to bank on the idea and take it up to the classroom. What can be more entertaining and engaging than music! Everyone enjoy music while travelling, at home, studying or even at work place. Rather than telling students to put off their smart phones, why not to make them pedagogical tools. It is in this context that the paper proposes using songs to teach English. Teacher can use song to start and end up their sessions, to illustrate theme, to teach grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure. It also helps in learning and memorizing of linguistic structures.

Undoubtedly, listening reinforces proficiency in English among second language learners. The paper focuses on how songs can be used as a valuable part of language teaching curriculum and help learners to improve their pronunciation. Besides, the peculiar melody of English language is difficult to teach in a second language learning environment. It is here that songs play great role in training students' ears to that melody. The paper also focuses on how songs reflect culture and increase students' overall understanding of socio-cultural background of English Language and that too with enjoyment in the classroom.

**Key Words:** Music, tool, pedagogy, classroom, learner, Second Language.



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### **Introduction:**

Songs can be a good tool teaching/learning a second language. For teacher also using a song in the classroom becomes a change from the monotonous pattern of curriculum. Throughout centuries philosophers, scientists, researchers and teachers have recognized importance of music for enhancement of language proficiency. If we look at the history of mankind, music has played a vital role in it. Before the development of written text, oral language was the only medium to narrate the things and to pass on the information, culture, and customs from one generation to another. In this century also, importance of songs and music cannot be denied in our life.

### **Using songs as pedagogical tools:**

It is difficult to escape from music and songs as they occupy major part of life. Songs can be used everywhere, for example in theatre, restaurant, in car, shopping mall, wedding ceremony, at sport events etc., except for school. But actually school is the only place where they can be used in the best way. D.T. Griffiee claims that, “Songs have a place in the classroom, for helping to create that friendly and cooperative atmosphere, so important for language learning, but they can offer much more.” Through songs teacher can create light and pleasant atmosphere. They are also helpful in memorizing linguistic pattern of language.

Salcedo perceives song as a “Melioration of memory of text and may be an effective way to provoke language acquisition. They also structure the grammatical structure strengthen into the class.” They also help to learn grammar of second language learning with fun. Moreover, Railley and ward say that “Young children can initiate accent, intonation and rhythm. Their pronunciation will gently improve since they center on the sound not machine”.

Songs provide flexibility to the teacher as well as learner of second language. They “grasp our imagination, emotions, and intellect with equal force regardless of our language background” (V.L.Homles and Margaret R.Moulton, 2001). It also helps learner to improve their listening skills which gradually helps them to improve their pronunciation and speaking skills. It can be one of the strongest tools to learn vocabulary, sentence patterns and structure. It also adds interest and motivation in the classroom.



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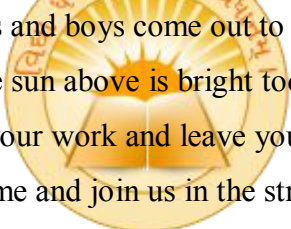
## Why Songs?

### Enhancement of Listening Skills:

Learner can get bored with the same pattern of language learning. Even repetition of the dialogue or script becomes monotonous. On the contrary, songs are less monotonous due to rhythm and melody. Teacher can use song which has same rhyming pattern. Teacher can also sing in the classroom and can allow students to sing in chorus.

### Enhancement of Speaking Skills:

The students can even practice same sound again and again in group or individually. Even songs have natural rhythm with similar pattern which can be useful to the learner. For example this song 'Girls and Boys come out to play' can be very useful to teach English rhythm and stress. (Richards, 1996)



Girls and boys come out to play,  
The sun above is bright today.  
Leave your work and leave your sleep,  
Come and join us in the street.  
Come with a shout and come with a call,  
Come with a smile and bring your ball.  
Down the steps and up the path,  
All the fun will make you laugh.

### Enjoyment:

Songs provide an opportunity to the young kids to move around, acting, dancing, clapping, playing instruments in the classroom, to make them active and energetic in the classroom.

### Sentence Structure:

Teacher can also use songs which carry 'wh' question and grammatical aspect of language, but sometimes teacher has to be very careful while choosing a song because some songs follow unusual pattern of language which is not used.



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### **Cultural Awareness:**

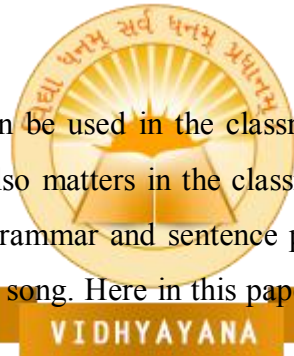
Most of the music and songs are now available through many sources either through TV, Radio, CDs, DVDs or they can be downloaded through internet. For adult learners they can be “a rich mine of information about human relations, ethics, customs, history, humor, and regional and cultural differences’ (Lems, 2001). They can learn various cultural aspects of different countries in the language classroom.

### **Vocabulary:**

Songs are the rich sources to teach vocabulary to the second language learner. Teacher may choose theme based songs. Songs like “*Head and Shoulder, Knees and Toes*” can be used for the body parts, and with gesture and posture. Teacher can make it more interesting and easy for the kid.

### **Types of Songs:**

There are many types of songs which can be used in the classroom from nursery rhymes to popular pop music. However, the age of the learner also matters in the classroom. For kids, teacher can use songs and rhymes which contain new vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns, and for advanced learner, teacher needs to be very careful while choosing a song. Here in this paper I have taken two songs for kids and two songs for adolescent learner.



### **Songs and Tasks:**

For kids, it is always fun to learn something through rhymes and songs. Teacher can give them pre - tasks before starting the session.

### **Song 1:**

#### **Pre-tasks**

1. Teacher can show picture of butterfly to the students and ask them to name it in English.
2. Teacher can also give them options to make identification easy for the students.

After that teacher can sing a song with gesture and also allow students to sing in chorus to make it more effective and interactive.



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**“Butterfly”**

Buh... Buh...Buh...

Buh...butterfly

Fly...Fly...Fly...

Fly in the sky,

Sky...sky...sky...

Sky is the blue

Blue...blue...blue

And I love you.



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**Post -task:**

**1. Match the following words from the given option.**

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| Sky | — | Red       |
|     | — | Green     |
|     | — | Blue      |
| Fly | — | Bee       |
|     | — | Honeybee  |
|     | — | Butterfly |

With this song teacher can make them learn new vocabulary and also introduce noun to them. Teacher can also ask them to find out more names of birds.



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## Song 2:

### Pre-tasks:

1. Teacher can play audio of animal's sound and ask them to guess name of the animals.
2. Teacher can also give them hints.

### “Name of Animals”

Who says quack?

The Duck. The Duck says quack, quack, quack.

Who says miaow?

The Cat. The Cat says miaow.

Who says maaaaa?

The Sheep. The Sheep says maaaaa.

Who says woof?

The Dog. The Dog says woof.

Who says tut,tut,tut?

The Rabbit. The Rabbit says tat,tat,tat.

Who says ee oo?

The Donkey says ee oo.

And who says moo? Who?

Who says moo? The Cow. How?

Like this: moooooooooo.





After this song, teacher can introduce 'wh' question pattern, name of the animals and how they speak and can also give idea about simple present tense.

**Post –task Activities:**

**1. Fill in the blanks.**

Who says tut, tut, tut?

The \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ says tat,tat,tat.

Who says woof?

The \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ says woof.

**2. Identify and match the names of the animal with below given pictures.**



Duck



Cat



Donkey





Dog



Rabbit



Cow

3. Match the sound of animals with their name.

- Cow
- Duck
- Sheep
- Cat
- Donkey

Miaow

Maaaaaaa

Ee oo

Quack

Moooooo

4. Teacher can ask them to sing this song in chorus.

Songs for Young Learner.

**Pre-task**

1. Teacher can make students listen to the songs and ask them to note-down rhyming which they come across.



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### "Everything At Once" by Lenka

As sly as a fox, as strong as an ox  
As fast as a hare, as brave as a bear  
As free as a bird, as neat as a word  
As quiet as a mouse, as big as a house

All I wanna be, all I wanna be, oh  
All I wanna be is everything

As mean as a wolf, as sharp as a tooth  
As deep as a bite, as dark as the night  
As sweet as a song, as right as a wrong  
As long as a road, as ugly as a toad

As pretty as a picture hanging from a fixture  
Strong like a family, strong as I wanna be  
Bright as day, as light as play  
As hard as nails, as grand as a whale

All I wanna be oh, all I wanna be, oh  
All I wanna be is everything  
Everything at once  
Everything at once, oh  
Everything at once

As warm as the sun, as silly as fun  
As cool as a tree, as scary as the sea  
As hot as fire, cold as ice  
Sweet as sugar and everything nice

As old as time, as straight as a line



As royal as a queen, as buzzed as a bee  
As stealth as a tiger, smooth as a glider  
Pure as a melody, pure as I wanna be

All I wanna be oh, all I wanna be, oh  
All I wanna be is everything  
Everything at once

**Post tasks:**

This song helps students to improve their vocabulary, listening skill and grammar.

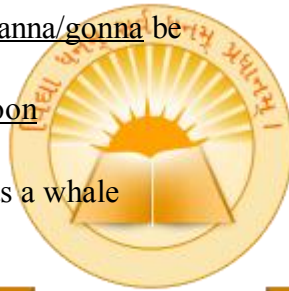
**1. Fill the blanks with appropriate words.**

As Pretty as a picture/painting hanging from a fixture

Strong like a family/lion, strong as I wanna/gonna be

Bright as day/sun, as light as play/balloon

As hard/sharp as nails, as grand/huge as a whale



**2. Listen the song and correct the mistake.**

As warm as the nail, as stupid as fun.....

As cool, as freeze, as funny as the sea.....

As cold as fire, hot as ice.....

Sweet as candy and everything nice.....

**3. Change the sentence by using given words in positive degree.**

Ex: The flower is beautiful.

The flower is as beautiful as sky.

- Rakesh is clever.



- Rekha is tall.
- Sky is blue.
- Mumbai is large city.

(Manan, Radha, Sea, Delhi)

4. **Teacher can ask students to write down what they want to be in their life.**

**Song: 2**

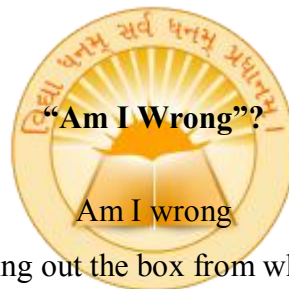
**Pre-tasks:**

1. **Write down synonyms of the following words.**

False, Actual, Think, Dream, Correct, Notice

2. **Write down antonyms of the following words.**

Right, Go, Death, Freedom.



Am I wrong

For thinking out the box from where I stay?

Am I wrong

For saying that I choose another way?

I ain't trying to do what everybody else doin'

Just 'cause everybody doin' what they all do

If one thing I know, I'll fall but I'll grow

I'm walking down this road of mine, this road that I call home

So am I wrong?

For thinking that we could be something for real?

Now am I wrong?

For trying to reach the things that I can't see?

But that's just how I feel,

That's just how I feel

That's just how I feel



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Trying to reach the things that I can't see (see, see, see)

Am I tripping  
For having a vision?  
My prediction  
I'ma be on the top of the world  
Walk your walk and don't look back,  
Always do what you decide  
Don't let them control your life, that's just how I feel oh whoa  
Fight for yours and don't let go,  
Don't let them compare you, no  
Don't worry, you're not alone, that's just how we feel

Am I wrong? (am I wrong?)  
For thinking that we could be something for real?  
(Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah, oh)  
Now am I wrong? (am I wrong?)  
For trying to reach the things that I can't see?  
(Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah, yeah)  
That's just how I feel,  
But that's just how I feel  
That's just how I feel  
Trying to reach the things that I can't see (see, see, see)

If you tell me I'm wrong, wrong  
I don't wanna be right, right  
If you tell me I'm wrong, wrong  
I don't wanna be right  
If you tell me I'm wrong, wrong  
I don't wanna be right, right  
If you tell me I'm wrong, wrong  
I don't wanna be right



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Am I wrong?

For thinking that we could be something for real?

Now am I wrong?

For trying to reach the things that I can't see?

But that's just how I feel,

But that's just how I feel

That's just how I feel

Trying to reach the things that I can't see (see, see, see)

So am I wrong? (am I wrong?)

For thinking that we could be something for real?

(Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah, oh)

Now am I wrong? (am I wrong?)

For trying to reach the things that I can't see?

(Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah, yeah)

But that's just how I feel,

That's just how I feel

But that's just how I feel

Trying to reach the things that I can't see (see, see, see)

Post –tasks:

1. Arrange the sentence in correct order in 1 to 5.

\_\_\_\_\_ I'm walking down this road of mine, this road that I call home.

\_\_\_\_\_ Now am I wrong?

\_\_\_\_\_ For saying that I choose another way?

\_\_\_\_\_ Fight for yours and don't let go.

\_\_\_\_\_ Trying to reach the things that I can't see.



**2. Change the following sentences into interrogative sentences.**

- I am intelligent.
- I am going to the market.
- She is reading a book.
- Mahesh is going to temple.
- Rakesh is not doing his homework.

3. What does “think out of box” in the first part of the song.

4. What does it mean “for trying to reach the things that I can’t see?”

**Conclusion:**

The purpose of this paper is to present how songs can be used for language learning task. Teacher can start with children’s song to make good initiative. Songs can be used as a valuable teaching and learning tool. Using songs in the classroom, not only help learner to improve their listen skills, pronunciation skills but also for their overall development.







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