

Song: An Effective Tool for Language Focus

Dr. Kalavathi Tiwari

*Professor of Communicative English at Jain Global Institutions, JGI, Bangalore,
(Karnataka) India*

Abstract

In the present scenario, Teaching of English as Second Language (TESL) not only in schools where the medium of instruction is other than English, but also in schools where the medium of instruction is English, has become a major concern and challenging for the teachers of English. The objective of this paper is to acquaint the teachers of English a very simple but an effective technique to teach grammar to the students. Grammar is an important aspect in acquiring language skills. A song could be an effective tool to teach grammar, a creative teacher generates teaching material to teach grammar from a song. Songs are a great source of 'real-life' language and can be used to practise lots of different language skills. Most of all, songs are a fun way to learn English!

Key Words : Song, tool, grammar, language focus

Introduction

The classroom undoubtedly creates a dynamic environment as it is an amalgamation of students from different backgrounds with diverse deftness, different abilities and various personalities. Hence a teacher should be an effective teacher by implementing creative and innovative teaching strategies in order to make the classroom a common place of learning for multiple types. According to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (1993), intelligences are of many kinds like linguistic, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, spatial and logical-mathematical intelligences. Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory suggests that since learners can represent their learning in multiple ways, teachers must assess all types of intelligences with a technique which should be multidimensional.

Krishnaswamy, (2006) states that an 'Indigenous approach' suitable to a multi-

cultural and multi-lingual context is required for the teaching of English in India.

In the present scenario, Teaching of English as Second Language (TESL) not only in schools where the medium of instruction is other than English, but also in schools where the medium of instruction is English, has become a major concern and challenging for the teachers of English. Aspiring Minds, an evaluation company on speaking skills of engineering students submits a report of a study conducted in the year 2013 with 1.2 lacs of engineering students taken for survey from 520 colleges across the country. The findings show that only 7.1 % of students can speak English which is meaningful and understandable during an interview. In the year 2015, number of students taken for survey was 30,000 from across 500 engineering colleges in the country. According to the results, engineers show larger gap in elements of spoken English,

pronunciation and fluency. Only 6.8% engineers show ability to speak or respond spontaneously. Hence there is a need for a change in teaching techniques and generating materials with diverse sources.

Ramírez (2004:2) defines materials as “anything used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language”. Tomlinson (1998: 2) considers dictionaries, grammar books, Poems from the textbooks, cinema songs, workbooks; cassettes, videos, CD-ROMs, DVDs; Internet sources; talks by guest speakers; and all kinds of objects from real life or from the real world as possible materials which could be utilized as teaching material in a language classroom by the teachers.

Grammar is an important aspect in acquiring language skills. A song could be an effective tool to teach grammar. A creative teacher generates teaching material to teach grammar from a song. Songs are a great source of ‘real-life’ language and can be used to practise lots of different language skills. Most of all, songs are a fun way to learn English!

Choosing good songs for learning outcome

The best learning happens when we have fun. So it’s really important to choose music as a tool for language focus. The best songs for learning English are

- not too long (1–3 verses)
- not too fast (easy to sing along)
- in everyday English (not too many new or difficult words)
- clear (you can easily hear all the words).

The following song ‘Jealous Guy’ by John Lennon is chosen for Language Focus.

Classroom Activities

The song is played two times. The students are given freedom to listen to the songs in their classroom. The lyrics of the song are also displayed on the white board.

Jealous Guy

John Lennon

I was dreaming of the past
And my heart was beating fast
I began to lose control
I began to lose control
I didn't mean to hurt you
I'm sorry that I made you cry
Oh my I didn't want to hurt you
I'm just a jealous guy

I was feeling insecure
You might not meet me anymore
I was shivering inside
I was shivering inside
Oh I didn't mean to hurt you
I'm sorry that I made you cry
Oh my I didn't want to hurt you
I'm just a jealous guy

I didn't mean to hurt you
I'm sorry that I made you cry
Oh my I didn't want to hurt you
I'm just a jealous guy

I was trying to catch your eyes
Thought that...

After listening to the song, the students are involved in activities. The teacher interrogates with the students about their previous knowledge in a grammar topic ‘Kinds of Tenses’. They are encouraged to recall their memory and explore the Tenses used in the song.

Activity 1: Recapitulation: The students with their previous knowledge explore the Tenses and find out Past Continuous Tense, Simple Past Tense and Negative of Simple Past Tense from the lyrics of the song. They also present it before the class.

(i) Past Continuous Tense:

‘ I was dreaming of the past’
‘And my heart was beating fast’
‘I was feeling insecure’
‘I was shivering inside’ and
‘I was trying to catch your eyes’

(ii). Simple Past Tense

‘I began to lose control’
‘I made you cry’

(iii). Negative of Simple Past Tense ‘I

didn’t mean to hurt you’
‘I didn’t want to hurt you’

After the presentation of the Tenses before the class, the students are taught the basic rules for constructing sentences in Past Continuous Tense (Subject+Special Verb+ Participle), Simple Past Tense (Subject+ Verb2) and negative of Simple Past Tense (Subject+didn’t + Main Verb) with examples.

After Teaching the grammar topic ‘Kinds of Tenses’, the following activity is conducted in the class.

Activity 2: Pair work: A class of 20 students is divided into 10 pairs and they are asked to read the lyrics of the song carefully and answer the following questions.

1. How many kinds of tenses are found in the song? Name the tenses found in the lyrics of the song?

2. Pick up the lines 1 & 2 and write in which tense are the verses in these two lines.
3. Pick up the lines 3 & 4 and write in which tense are the verses in these two lines.
4. Pick up the lines 7 & 8 and write in which tense are the verses in these two lines.
5. “I didn’t mean to hurt you”- What kind of sentence is this?
6. “I’m sorry that I made you cry” – what is the Mood in the lyrics here?
7. Compose three more lines and bring an end to the song.

Activity 3: Group work - The teacher divides the class into 3 groups and asks them to construct their own sentences, minimum 5 in the following tenses each.

- i. Simple Past
- ii. Past Continuous Tense
- iii. Negative of the Simple Past

The first group is given the task of constructing 5 sentences in i. Simple Past, the second group in ii. Past Continuous Tense, and the third iii. Negative of the Simple Past

Exercise for practice

Fill in the blanks with Simple Past or Past Continuous or Negative of Simple Past of the verbs given in the brackets.

1. I ----- (sleep) in a dormitory with five other boys the previous night.
2. My father ----- (take) his lunch when you ----- (ring) up to him.
3. He ----- (arrive) in time. So he ----- (miss) his bus.

4. Anupama ----- (beat) her brother because he ----- (utter) a lie to her in the morning.
5. The students ----- (attempt) all the questions in English exam because they said that they had no sufficient time.

It is hoped that **Songs** are taken as a tool in **Schools and colleges** and the Teachers of Teaching English as Second Language will adopt this Technique and create a lively atmosphere in teaching grammar in their classes.

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