

SONG AS SAGA: CURRICULUM-BASED SONGS FOR LEARNING

Ms. Aniko Debreceeny

Charles Darwin University, Australia, adebreceeny@verizon.net

Abstract

Teaching is always a challenging profession, and one in which teachers are constantly looking for ways to improve their teaching methods. In this paper I will argue that the use of song in the classroom can provide both an enhanced learning experience for the students and improved learning outcomes.

Why use song to enhance learning? Music is the soundtrack of our students' lives, and is virtually omnipresent in today's culture. Multiple studies show that music instruction has positive benefits, enhances spatial & arithmetic skills, and raises student achievement and retention. Singing is a multi-modal activity, positively affecting brain development and neural processing. It provides an enjoyable, low-stress learning method in the classroom. Young students in particular find memorization is improved through repetition and constant retrieval, as when singing songs over a period of time. ESL/EFL/TESOL language teachers frequently use songs, while the use of songs for bilingual or Content and Language Integrated Learning, where curriculum content is taught in the second language, is expanding worldwide. However, many educators point out the lack of good teaching materials, including songs, which hinders the use of song in the classroom, whether it be ESL, CLIL, or general academics. One solution to the problem is creating multimedia presentations of songs, enabling teachers who are not musicians to teach curriculum-based songs without concern about their musical abilities. Integrating relevant visuals with audio also improves retention, as well as student engagement and motivation.

The research shows that using song improves learning and retention, and is a valuable teaching tool for both general and language teachers. This paper examines the current literature about the use of song in the school classroom and documents the creative process of writing curriculum-based songs for middle school.

Keywords: Song, benefits, curriculum-based songs, retention, learning, EFL, TESOL, teaching materials