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Revista Publicando, 4 No 13. (1). 2017, 986-994. ISSN 1390-930

The use of songs in the development of the oral skill in kichwa speaker students

Cristina del Rocío Jordán Buenaño¹, Raúl Yungan Yungan²

1 Universidad Técnica de Ambato, cristinadjordanb@uta.edu.ec

2 Universidad Técnica de Ambato, ryungan@uta.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to know if listening to songs in English can help people improve their performance with learning English as a second language. That is why we could hire this design to control the random form of student performance. The study sample consisted of analyzing EFL students, both men and women, to see how effective the use of the songs is in improving the performance of the language. The students were randomly assigned in groups to be studied. After implementing the path with the songs, an evaluation was used to verify if the two groups with the proposed method to help with language improvement. In what was put into practice, around of fifteen songs in English for the group at the time of its evaluation. Each session, in 30 minutes, a song was put on and practiced with the students.

Meanwhile, with the other group a normal class will be maintained in which no song was heard. In the end, both groups were designed with an evaluation to be able to see what is the result with the songs or not to improve the performance with the English language. The database could be selected independent samples and in the same way paired samples. The results include an update with the proposed degree to help improve their language skills. With this we can realize that the songs not only serve as a means to entertain, which in turn we can use as a pedagogical material to improve the understanding of the English language as a second language.

Keywords.- Listening, EFL, song, evaluation, oral skill, kichwa



1. INTRODUCTION

The use of songs in an EFL classroom is seen as a tool to change the mood of students. However, in a well-aimed lesson a song can work beyond the boundaries of changing the mood of students, so that students can learn pronunciation, vocabulary, idioms, and even grammar. A wide variety of literature demonstrates the role that songs can play in an EFL classroom, but the present research goes beyond because it analyses, according to the conclusions drawn by some scholars, the way in which songs influence the speaking skills on EFL learners.

In the contexts of motivating students, and changing their mood, Ornerová (2011), considers the role of songs in EFL classroom as primary because according to this author language learning is a never-ending process, and songs can help students either inside or outside formal education. In that way, songs can motivate students not only to learn the vocabulary and pronunciation of the lyrics of their favorite songs, but also to come motivated to class or to make them eager to learn something new through the use of songs.

According to Grünert (2009), the use of songs, written in the target language, is a suitable and practical way to teach English because it allows the integration of the literacy skills. It supports the fact that songs are not only a tool to engage students in the topic of the lesson. Songs can also be a resource to teach any kind of topic, the limits are only set by the creativity of the teacher. This assertion involves the assumption that songs contain not only the culture of the place where they were written, but also a big amount of language structures, so teachers can take advantage of the content of lyrics to reach any kind of goal.

Another advantage of the use of songs is related to its versatility, it means that songs can be a resource in any level and in any age. Krawiec (2014) states that songs are a great resource with children because they like to perform the activities contained in the song. Therefore, in a very beginning level, where the TPR approach is used, songs can help teachers to attain goals like the acquisition of new vocabulary, and structures. In the advanced levels, songs are also useful because students not only learn new words and grammar; they also enjoy the story, can negotiate meaning, and so on. Other scholars support the previous assertion:



“...young learners who receive input encoded with songs and chants are more apt to read, more receptive and alert, and most of all more enthusiastic in their responses. This leads to the conclusion that lyrics in songs and chants are an optimal resource for beginning language learners because the lyrical chunks contain manageable language building blocks such as stress, rhymes, rhythm, intonation, vocabulary, and even sentence patterns.” (Chuang, 2016)

The quotation above demonstrates and supports the fact that songs are useful in any level, even since the very beginning. Teachers only have to lead the selection of songs to the learners' level, so that the activities derived from the song will keep relation with the student's level.

Similarly, Sull (2012) believes that music can increase children's development in language skills like listening and speaking, and in other fields like rhyming and vocabulary building. It means that songs, when they are well aimed, can be more than a tool to reduce stress or to shape a friendly learning environment. They can act as a very useful resource which can help teachers to transmit any kind of knowledge like vocabulary, grammar, and even intonation and pronunciation. In addition to all the information already quoted, other authors, like Gebhard (2006), declare that songs are one of the most valuable sources of authentic English. In that way, songs teach students how native speakers utter words in a wide variety of dialects. It allows students to acquire fluency and accuracy. It even helps learners to attain high levels of understanding in interactive conversations with native speakers because of its content full of culture, idioms, dialects, and so on.

A similar assertion was done by Szpyra (2014). This scholar considers that in contexts with limited exposure to the target language, songs allow students to improve their pronunciation. In that context, songs are an advantageous way to expose students to the target language because they can be used outside of the classroom, not only to reinforce the structures practiced inside the class, but also to create awareness about pronunciation, intonation, and sentence patterns in EFL learners.

By paying attention to those considerations, Richards & Burns (2011) asserts that students should be exposed to the language as much as they can because English is a



stress-time language, and songs are one source of authentic language which has grammar, intonation patterns, pronunciation, syntax, stress, vocabulary, and so on. Furthermore, by making students sing the song, students can also practice all the language which is inside the lyrics of the song. In other words, listening activities can help teachers to enhance the oral skills of students, because this is one effective way to make learners notice how the language works in a meaningful way. Finally, the last important matter for teachers is how to choose the most suitable songs. In that context, Wickham (2011) states that students' preferences and the language level of them are items to bear in mind. In that way, teachers can keep engaged their students in the task, and thus reach the goals set to the use of particular songs. The use of a song whose content has complex structures, and vocabulary which has not been rehearsed previously might obstruct the development of the skills. Therefore, teachers are in charge of making the decision of what songs are suitable to use inside the classroom because using a song which is even the favorite of students can have counterproductive effects.

2. METHODS.

Participants

Seventy male and female learners, aged between 11 and 13, from the A1.1 level were the participants for the present research. They were divided into two classes of 35 students. Those students were from UNIDAD EDUCATIVA DEL "MILEMIUM", Quisapincha. They came from a bilingual background (Kichua and Spanish). To identify how developed their oral skills are, it was necessary to apply a Preliminary Test in order to standardize their exposure to songs in English.

Instruments and materials

Speaking Test Basic 1

"*Speaking Test Basic 1*" is a test done by Engoo, an online English school born in Japan. The objective of this test is to check the level of fluency and accuracy on the oral skills, of learners at the beginning of a course. It means that this test was specifically designed with diagnostic purposes. It is divided into three parts, which are related to the oral skills of beginner learners like fluency and accuracy. The first section assesses how students utter some words and sentences. The second is focused



in fluency. It presents a reading text that students have to read aloud, so that their fluency can be measured. The last section is aimed to evaluate oral production by means of answering to some questions of the reading text of section number two.

In this test the score is giving by a rubric which evaluates students in a range from 0 to 5, where 0 is the lowest grade, and 5 is the highest one.

Songs

Bearing in mind the socio-cultural background of the participants, teachers had to choose the most suitable songs because the majority of students did not have any knowledge about singers or famous songs. With that antecedent, the following 10 songs were chosen to develop 3 activities. First, students had to listen to the song without the handout of the lyrics. Then, students had to hear again the song, but in that occasion they had to fill the gaps. If students were not able to fill all the gaps teacher could play again the song. Finally, students had to sing the song.

1. *Yellow submarine* by The Beatles.
2. *I will always love you* by Whitney Houston.
3. *My heart will go on* by Celine Dion.
4. *Imagine* by John Lennon.
5. *You are so beautiful* by Joe Cocker.
6. *What a wonderful world* of Louis Armstrong played by “Playing for change”.
7. *With or without you* by U2.
8. *White Christmas* by The Drifters
9. *Thank you* by Dido
10. *Don't speak* by No Doubt.

All the songs above were chosen because they offer a slow pace in the pronunciation, and an accurate utterance of words that allowed students to sing along the song without too much trouble. In addition, those songs are of easy access because they can be played for free in YouTube. Songs 9 and 10 are a little more complicated because it encourages students to make an extra effort to reach the goal of the activities.

Post test



To measure whether students improve their skills after the exposure to songs in English or not, the “*Speaking Test Basic I*” was taken. It is similar to the one taken in the diagnostic stage, and it has the same three sections and the same way of evaluation from 0 to 5.

Design

This research intends to determine whether songs can enhance the oral skills on learners or not. To reach this objective, an experimental design was employed with two groups. The first group was exposed to songs written and sung in English, while the second one was not affected by any kind of exposure to songs.

The independent variable of this investigation is the use of songs, and the dependent variable is the oral skill. In that context, the variable to be measured is the oral skill. The evaluation of it was done by the use of “*Speaking Test Basic 1*”

RESULTS.

The first table shows the mean scores gotten by students in the three sections of the preliminary test. In this table, the results of both groups, the one that was exposed to the songs (*experiential*) and the other that was not (control), is shown.

Table 1.- Main scores of the pre-test.

Group	Section 1 (utterance)	Section 2 (Reading aloud)	Grade Section 3 (Oral production)
Experiential	1,6	1,9	0,7
Control	1,3	2,2	0,8

Source: Speaking Test Basic 1 taken to the participants.

Done by: Jordan, C. & Yungan, R. (2018)

The table above shows that students at this level make mistakes at the moment of uttering simple words and sentences. They also make pronunciation mistakes at the moment of reading aloud, and they also do not pay attention to rhythm and intonation. In the same way, the pre-test shows that students do not have the ability to answer to questions. In addition, the table above demonstrates that both groups do not have a significant difference in the level of their oral skills, so it can be asserted that they are in the same level.

After the application of the preliminary test, the experiential group was exposed to activities which entail the use of songs. The following table has the



results gotten after the “Speaking Test Basic 2” was taken to both control and experiential groups.

Table 2.- Main scores of the post-test.

Group	Section 1 (utterance)	Section 2 (Reading aloud)	Grade Section 3 (Oral production)
Experiential	2,1	2,7	1,2
Control	1,0	2,5	1,1

Source: Speaking Test Basic 2 taken to the participants.

Done by: Jordan, C. & Yungan, R. (2018)

Table 2 demonstrates, without doubt, that the experiential group has a significant development in their skills in comparison to the control group, in all the sections of the test.

The following chart compares the results of the pre-test and post-test to establish whether the participants improve their oral skills or not.

Table 3.- Comparison of the scores gotten in the pre-test and post-test.

Group	Test	Section 1 (utterance)	Section 2 (Reading aloud)	Grade Section 3 (Oral production)
Experiential	Pre	1,6	1,9	0,7
	Post	2,4	2,9	1,6
Control	Pre	1,3	2,2	0,8
	Post	1,1	2,5	1,0

Source: Speaking Test Basic 1

Done by: Jordan, C. & Yungan, R. (2018)

This last table has valuable information. It is easy to determine the improvement of students who have been exposed to the use of songs. They have improved their oral skills in about 0,9 points, while the control group is still in the range of their previous grades.

CONCLUSIONS.

Once the analysis and the results of all the oral and listening activities have been completed, a series of very important points can be reached that also serve as an input for those who work in the field of foreign language teaching



In this sense, music is a universal and motivating element, which students perceive as something fun, that is part of their daily life and that helps them to break with the daily routine, motivating them in their own learning. Therefore, the educator must use music as an interdisciplinary tool. With this, we do not intend to defend music as the only resource; as teachers, we have to offer various activities so that our classes do not fall into monotony and we can experience the benefits of applying other materials in the classroom (i.e. movies, news, speeches, comics, TV shows, games, etc.).

In addition to the motivational use of songs, this research demonstrates that they can also be a resource to improve language skills. As we have seen in the results, the use of songs, in the experiential group, helps students to improve their pronunciation, rhythm and intonation since the very beginning.

The present work has tried to advance in the study of how to improve the oral skills, but 0,9 points of improvement in the experiential group is not significant at all.

Therefore, more and deeper investigation is suggested, especially with more time of exposure to the songs. However, this research, besides of demonstrating that songs enhance the speaking skills of EFL learners, offers a compilation of new resources in musical matters (songs and tests) that can be used in future investigations.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that students love music, even they do not have knowledge of some singers because of their socio-cultural background. There are many activities that can be derived from the use of songs and due to the huge variety of topics that are treated in them there is a range of opportunities, we simply must be creative teachers and willing to play with the songs, believe in their benefits and allow our students to make use of music and learn in a dynamic, interesting and entertaining way.

In conclusion, we are convinced that all students could improve their oral skills in English if they perform musical activities of the type selected for this research.



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