

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MEMORIZING WORDS VIA MODERN SONGS

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Abstract: in a world of rapid changes and globalization, languages are essential tools for achieving success in career and personal life. That is why many people choose to learn new languages. However, the language learning process may be regarded as a burden by some people, because they mistakenly think that they have to devote a certain amount of time for dull studying and there is no room for flexibility when it comes to languages. Learning a language as a subject in school is also might seem tiresome and stressful. However, the learning process can be easily made enjoyable and less time-consuming, if you integrate it with activities you enjoy such as listening to music. Young learners are in favor to listen to music during the lesson as an aid in the learning process rather than filling up the worksheets that do not seem to have an application in real life. Once learners choose the song, they can start learning. The process of improving the vocabulary includes listening to the song while reading its lyrics.

The main aim of the project is to show the efficiency of learning vocabulary through song lyrics and recommend how it can be integrated into the classroom and everyday life.

Goals:

- Identify scientific reasons behind the efficiency of learning languages through music
- Analyze past practices of the music integration into the language learning process
- Conduct an experiment and survey to confirm the effectiveness of the method
- Create a mobile application and methodology for teachers to use this method in real life

Steps:

- Analysis of past literature;
- Conducting an experiment and a survey;
- Creating a mobile app and methodology;

The actuality of the project is that knowledge of the second language is crucial in making meaningful connections with people all around the world and for job-seeking purposes. In USA demand for employees with the knowledge of the second language doubled during 2010-2015. That is why nowadays learning a foreign language equals to getting a degree. On the other hand, many people around the world are streaming songs non-stop and on average citizens of the USA and UK listen to music for 3-4 hours a day, which is an impressive amount of time and using even the third of this time for learning new words will surely bring real results.

The subject of the project is song lyrics.

The object of the project is to prove the effectiveness of learning new words through music.

The scientific novelty of the project is that the new approach in learning vocabulary with the use of music to enhance the productivity of the language-learning process is introduced as a product of the survey of past literature and primary research.

The methods are the experiment, the survey and the analysis of literature.

The hypothesis is that the new approach created as a result of this project will be a helpful tool for teachers to engage students in the learning process and increase the effectiveness of the lessons. Individual learners also will be able to integrate this method into their routine to use the time they spend listening to music to actively learn new vocabulary. Music is a helpful tool in teaching new words and students themselves would be glad to use this method at school as well as in their leisure time .

The results:

- Scientific arguments for integration of music into the language learning process were introduced;
- Mobile app and methodology for English teachers was created

Keywords: an effective method, learning foreign languages, song lyrics, a new approach, teachers, students, music, sociology, neurobiology, psychology.

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Why it is efficient to integrate music into language learning process?

While many people acknowledge the connection between music and second-language acquisition, not all of them have a strong argumentation for the statement. Although there are some guidelines for teachers on how to incorporate music into the classroom but almost none of them include a theoretical background of the matter [1]. Due to the lack of understanding many educational systems hesitate to incorporate music into their programs. Individual learners also easily fall into the trap of learning languages through textbooks without considering shortcuts like media, which includes music. They falsely assume that listening to a language requires deep knowledge of it first. However, many studies in sociology, neurobiology, and psychology have been conducted to collect theoretical evidence for the integration of music into the language learning process from as early as beginner's level. The analysis of literature has been conducted to collect the evidence for the proposition of music integration into education and individual learner's experience.

1. In the classroom.

"Life would be marvelous for teachers if all students wanted to learn" [2]. For many language teachers finding an effective method of pedagogy is a constant battle and while many of them realize that there is a sense in adding music into their curriculum as a helpful tool in understanding and acquiring a language, not practice it [3]. However, there are many reasons why they should:

a. Global Citizenship

For the young generation and Millennials all around the world, popular music serves as a valuable tool in finding their identity and relating to the world [4]. Music helps them to build their opinion and find other people with whom they can share it, creating a feeling of belonging that all human beings look for. Modern pop culture is connecting the whole world. That is why it is an excellent idea to add it to the classroom. Not only music comforts students and lowers their anxiety level, but it also creates a strong association between learning a target language and this feeling of content created by familiar music. By letting students engage with an important and well-known concept in their life [5], teachers empower "their knowledge, their music, and their culture" [6]. When music is added to a classroom students feel their culture being acknowledged and respected, boosting their confidence. As Furlong and Maynard [7] noted learning material should be relatable for students so that they can be more receptive to knowledge input, and music is a great tool in achieving this effect.

b. Stress level

The affective filter hypothesis created by Krashen [8] states that effective learning is created in a stress-free environment. Classrooms and educational institutions as a whole are mostly referred to as "formal" environments, where "formal" learning occurs, while "informal" learning is the learning type we use when we acquire knowledge on our own. Music can be an effective tool in closing the gap between these two learning styles [9] encouraging students to learn a language outside of school since a language will stop being a school-related concept but music-related concept. It also helps teachers to form helpful relationships with students, erasing the stereotypical intimidating image of a teacher. Teachers and students get to know each other's tastes in music and by discussing such simple and real-life related topics teachers ultimately lower affective barrier of students, creating a welcoming atmosphere in a classroom.

Pop songs are also very effective at lowering the affective barrier due to their certain characteristics and it is often called a "teddy-in-the-ear" effect [10]. "This simplicity, their highly affective and dialogic features, and their vague references (ghost discourse) allow listeners to use them in personally associative ways" [10].

Moreover, many subjects taught in school can seem intimidating since they require a certain degree of knowledge and students may feel unconfident at the lesson answering teacher's questions regarding a subject. However, it is not the case with music. When present during the lesson music can empower students and inspire their confidence since they are familiar with the topic and it does not require sophisticated knowledge, but rather learners' opinion and engagement. A high level of student confidence, in turn, ensures that the taught material is received better.

c. Motivation

The motivation level of a student hugely affects the learning process and the result of both student's and teacher's efforts. Extensive research has proven that the use of music in the class [11], increases students' motivation to learn since it has a strong relationship with real-life [12]. Music occurs everywhere from everyday conversations about recent hits to cafes and restaurants where it is played as background noise. Being able to understand those everyday things in a target language is more motivating than succeeding in an upcoming vocabulary test in the eyes of students since the latter has little or no appeal to them due to a strong association between exams and a high level of difficulty. Moreover, students are more motivated to listen to music during the lesson as an aid in the learning process rather than filling up the worksheets that don't seem to have an application in real life.

d. Context

Many teachers may be concerned with the context of songs when considering using music in a classroom. It is true that many songs have "swear words", inappropriate references and sometimes even ideas that may be incompatible with beliefs that are thought in educational institutions (human rights, tolerance, etc.). However, even in literature, there are many works that have inappropriate language too, but teachers do not include them

in the curriculum. The same can be done with songs that are used in the language learning process. Since it is important for songs used in a classroom to be full of useful vocabulary and structures, suitable songs can be selected. For example, rock songs were proven to be a good source of useful content [13] for language learners and they provide listeners with “valid authentic text” [14], [15], [1]. By carefully choosing works that have a rich vocabulary and provide with good examples of language use teachers can actually use music for their shared benefit. Songs also have many lexical stylistic devices such as metaphors, epithets, and modern slang. Those are also a huge part of every language and songs that provide good in-context examples of them can be a huge help for teachers in helping children the topic better.

Examples:

"Sorry" - Justin Bieber [16]

You gotta go and get angry at all of my honesty
 You know I try but I don't do too well with apologies
 I hope I don't *run out of time*. Could someone call a *referee*?
 'Cause I just need one more *shot at forgiveness*
 I know you know that I made those mistakes maybe once or twice
 And by once or twice I mean maybe a couple of hundred times
 So let me, oh, let me redeem, oh, *redeem*, oh, myself tonight
 'Cause I just need one more *shot at second chances*

- [*run out of time*](#) - to not have enough hours, etc. available to finish something you are trying to do
- [*a referee*](#) - a person who is in charge of a sports game and who makes certain that the rules are followed (metaphor)

- [*shot \(attempt\) at something*](#) - an attempt to do or achieve something that you have not done before
- [*redeem*](#) - to make something or someone seem less bad

"Blank Space" - Taylor Swift [17]

Nice to meet you, where you been?
 I could show you incredible things
 Magic, madness, heaven sin
 Saw you there and I thought
 Oh my God, look at that face
 You look like my next mistake
 Love's a game, want to play?
 New money, suit and tie
 I can *read you like a magazine*
 Ain't it funny, *rumors fly*
 And I know you heard about me
 So hey, let's be friends
 I'm *dying to see* how this one ends

- [*read someone like a magazine*](#) - to be able to understand easily what someone is thinking or feeling
- [*rumors fly*](#) - rumors are spreading quickly
- [*dying to \(see\)*](#) - wanting to have/do something so much that you do not want to wait

"Roar" - Katy Perry [18]

I used to *bite my tongue* and *hold my breath*
 Scared to rock the boat and *make a mess*
 So I sat quietly, agreed politely
 I guess that I forgot I had a choice
 I let you *push me past the breaking point*
 I *stood for nothing*, so I fell for everything

- [*bite \(your\) tongue*](#) - to stop yourself from saying something that you would really like to say (idiom)
- [*hold \(your\) breath*](#) - to keep air in your lungs and not release it so that you need more (idiom)
- [*make a mess*](#) - to do something badly or spoil something
- [*\(push past\) the breaking point*](#) - the stage at which your control over yourself or a situation is lost
- [*stand for something*](#) - to support or accept particular principles or values
- [*fall for something*](#) - to be deceived by something, esp. a lie

2. Cognitive science

Studies in neuroscience and psychology have shown that music is a huge help in retaining information due to its characteristics and many effects.

a. Proceeding of information

Many neuroscientists are arguing whether language-specific information and musical structures are stored in the same part of the brain or in different regions. Some works in the research of music's effect on our brain have stated that information about music and language is stored in different parts of the brain/managed by

independent processes [19], [20]. However, other works suggest the opposite. For example, Patel [21] gathered neuroimaging data that proves “convergence in the processing of the syntactic relations in language and music” [1].

The final resolution that was concluded from this contradicting researches is that “a specific point of convergence between these theories leads to the hypothesis that syntax in language and music share a common set of processes (instantiated in front brain areas) that operate on different structural representations (in posterior brain areas)” [21]. Hence, there is a strong neurological association between music and language which ensures that learning a language and attaching it to the music has a positive effect on retaining information.

b. Memory

Music has an odd quality of being easily memorized which can also be called “song-stuck-in-my-head phenomena” [22]. It is caused by internally repeating after the lyrics and since “vocabulary recall attached to visual or auditory cues” [1][23] is memorized better “lexical patterns” from songs are stored along with the music in long-term memory [24]. Many neurological data confirm that music is easily memorized and it is a good idea to use this property to also memorize the vocabulary of a language better.

Primary Research

The qualitative and quantitative research on students of middle and high school was conducted to gather the data that would support the main point of the project that song lyrics help to retain new vocabulary better.

1. The experiment

Subjects: students of two 7th, and two 12th Grades

Methods:

- 1) Two popular pop songs were chosen and the lists of words of the upper-intermediate and advanced level were collected.
- 2) Two groups of students were formed. The first group was the control group and the second one was the group that the actual test was performed on.
- 3) The first group was given 3 minutes to memorize the list of the words, then the papers were collected and students took a test on how well they remembered the words for an unlimited amount of time. The same has been done for the second song.
- 4) The second group was given laptops and individual headphones. For several minutes students watched the lyrics video with a full translation of the song in hand of the song while also memorizing the word list. After the papers, laptops and headphones were collected and the group was tested on how well they remembered the words for an unlimited amount of time. The same has been done for the second song.
- 5) To prevent cheating students were seated in chess order and no interactions between them were allowed.
- 6) The tests were gathered and analyzed.

2. The survey

The survey was conducted as qualitative research among high school students on the platform surveymonkey.com to explore the music’s impact on their language learning journey and their opinion on the perspective of adding music into the classroom.

Questions:

1. Слушаете ли вы зарубежные песни для изучения языка (Do you listen to foreign songs in learning a language)? (multiple-choice question)
 - a. Да (Yes)
 - b. Нет (No)
 - c. Еще не использовал(-а) этот метод (I haven’t tried it yet)
2. Используют ли ваши учителя песни в процессе преподавания языков (Do your teachers use songs in the language learning process)? (multiple-choice question)
 - a. Часто (Frequently)
 - b. Иногда (Sometimes)
 - c. Редко (Rarely)
 - d. Никогда (Never)
3. Как вы относитесь к тому чтобы внедрить музыку в процесс изучения языков в школе? (What is your attitude towards the implementation of music into language learning process at school?)(slider)
 - a. Негативно (Negative)
 - b. Нейтрально (Neutral)
 - c. Положительно (Positive)

Evaluation

According to the experiment’s results, there was a difference in the amount of words students memorized with and without the aid of song lyrics. The mean number of words learned by students of 7th grade without music was overall approximately 5.5 words, while with music it was 9.4 out of 11, which can be evidence of the beneficial influence of music on students. Likewise, the results for 12th Grades were 7.3 and 9.2 out of 11, with

and without the help of music, respectively. Therefore, this experiment provides direct evidence of the beneficial influence of music on the learning process, since the difference in the number of words learned is obvious.

The limitations of the experiment are the number of participants which was limited and hence the results can't be applied for all high school students without testing the method on more students. Also, students from 12th Grade might have been already familiar with either the lyrics of the song or the vocabulary tested, which explains the little difference in the mean number of remembered words between the control group and tested group (compared to 7th Grade). Overall, more students from different grades should be tested in further research to yield more reliable results.

The survey collected 90 answers from high school students, and according to the results, 73% of learners are already using music to learn a foreign language. However, approximately 70% of students reported that music is either rarely or never used in the language learning classroom, which indicates that teachers are in fact not using songs to their full potential. Overall, students supported the integration of music into the classroom for 87%.

In conclusion, the results of both the experiment and the survey, music is a helpful tool in teaching new words and students themselves would be glad to use this method at school.

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to gather data that would prove the efficiency of using music in the language learning process. According to the literature review, there are many works in psychology, linguistics, and neurobiology that prove the correlation between music and the learning process. It has been stated by many scholars that songs are a useful tool in teaching a language and it should be added to the classroom for its many characteristics. Music is easily memorized, it is comforting and familiar. Therefore, it is crucial to use it for the students' benefit.

The experiment on high school students was conducted to prove that song lyrics help students retain new vocabulary better and the results were positive. The survey also showed that despite not being used often, students are more than ready to welcome music into their classrooms. Hence, integrating songs into the studying process is not only logical but also encouraged by students themselves.

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