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## **THE ROLE OF SONGS IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

*Songs are sources of authentic language used in the real world by real people. Songs can serve as a source of new vocabulary for students as they provide new words in a meaningful context. Teachers can use songs in different ways and students can guess the meaning of the new words either from the song itself or through the exercises and with potential help from the teacher. Songs can work well as examples of specific grammatical structures, also they can provide certain cultural knowledge. Due to songs the lessons become more active and motivating. The paper discusses the ways of teaching English through songs, the types of activities to be included in the song-based lesson plan. The paper also provides information about a number of helpful online applications and resources such as Tube Quizzard and Lyrics Training.*

**Key words:** *foreign language learning, communicative method, songs, new vocabulary, context, grammatical structures, online platforms, resources, Tube Quizzard, Lyrics Training*

Communicative language teaching (CLT) became a source of great excitement and enthusiasm when it first emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a modern approach to language teaching, and language teachers all over the world soon started updating their teaching syllabuses, and classroom materials. Grammar was no longer the starting point in preparing language courses in the framework of the Communicative Approach. New approaches were required for language teaching. Instead of simply identifying the grammar and vocabulary learners needed to learn, it was suggested that a syllabus should define the needs of the learners to improve their communicative competence.

The main aim in CLT is to express meaning, and language is seen as a tool for learners to achieve this goal. For this reason, the syllabus of courses that adopt Communicative Approach to teaching prefers lessons that will help students practice and develop their linguistic skills, rather than their grammatical competence. Language is used as a tool for communication in this approach.

Students gain confidence through direct experience, if they are motivated, they participate in the activities with pleasure, which encourages them to use the language more often and allows them to learn more quickly.

It is well known that language is interaction; it is a tool of communication, it is interpersonal practice. That's why we should look at the use of language in context, both its linguistic context and its social, or situational context.

The role of the teacher in a language classroom is that of the facilitator of his students' learning. Teacher is the manager of classroom activities. The teacher has the responsibility of creating situations, which will help to promote communication. The students are communicators. They learn to communicate by communicating. In CLT, learning activities are planned according to the interests of the learner. H.G. Widdowson mentions that the "natural" way of acquiring a language is slow and not very efficient and the purpose of language teaching is to make this process fast and simple. He suggests that language teachers need to help learners by providing them with materials, patterns and rules to develop their communicative language skills /[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49617977\\_HG\\_WIDDOWSON\\_Learning\\_Purpose\\_and\\_Language\\_Use\\_HG\\_WIDDOWSON/](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49617977_HG_WIDDOWSON_Learning_Purpose_and_Language_Use_HG_WIDDOWSON/).

The teacher also has the duty of structuring classrooms in a manner that motivates students. He should focus on both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Discussing topics and materials of genuine interest for learners is a useful tool for sustaining and increasing their motivation.

Widdowson believes that Communicative language teaching should include activities that are interesting to the learners and challenge their linguistic abilities while at the same time, capturing their imagination and motivating them to continue to acquire and use foreign language beyond the textbook and classroom /Widdowson, 1996: 45-46/. Language teachers should provide diverse, interesting and abundant communicative activities and relevant and interesting materials.

Authenticity of the materials is also a very important factor in Communicative language teaching. They provide the basis for communication among the learners. According to Richards & Rodgers, there are three basic types of material.

These are text-based materials, task-based materials and realia.

1. Text-based materials like textbooks designed on CLT principles will offer the learners many kinds of prompts on which they can build up conversations. They contain visual material, pictures and sentence fragments which the learners can use as a starting point for conversation. Other books consist of different texts the teacher can use for pair work. Learners get texts with different information and the task is to ask each other questions to get to know the content of the missing piece.
2. Task-based materials consist of exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials and student-interaction practice booklets.

3. Using realia in communicative language teaching means using authentic material, for example newspaper articles, photos, maps, films, songs. Material which can be touched, watched, listened to and held makes speaking and learning more exact and meaningful.

In this paper we speak about songs and their role in CLT. Songs are sources of authentic language used in the real world by real people. Also songs are very popular among students of different ages – they can identify themselves with the lyrics, which serves as a motivating factor. Giving students a chance to choose their own songs is a very good practice as the students become more involved in the process of learning. Choosing their own songs that are closer and more up to date gives students a great feeling of responsibility. Murphey says: “My belief is that teachers should share the responsibility of choosing songs with the students, and let them choose videos and songs, let them present them in class, and prepare exercises for their classmates. This will give them more active control over and responsibility for their own learning” /Murphey, 1992: 25/.

It is obviously not enough for teachers to use a song in their classes and think the song will suddenly affect students in such a positive way that after a few song-based lessons they’ll start to communicate fluently. There is actually a lot of work and time spent on the preparation behind a good lesson. We must remember that songs are “only” tools for helping the students to acquire the language and just remembering the lyrics by heart is not enough for the students to communicate. Songs can work well as examples of specific grammatical structures, as a source of vocabulary, as well as impart some cultural knowledge.

Learners can use the songs to understand the culture of the target language, as they are the authentic resources which give students some information about the traditions and habits of the target nation. Griffiee notes that songs “offer insights into the culture and especially the stories and myths of different societies, providing a window into the frames of reference and values of the people whose language we are learning. They offer a rich background and a social and historical context to language learning” /Griffiee, 1992: 109/.

Through songs learners can learn the words that belong both to the common vocabulary as well as the colloquial layer of the language. Any song consists of a text (lyrics) and melody (tune). It is important to mention that music is a relevant tool for language learning as the rhythm always helps the learning process. Students irrespective of their age, are inclined to catch any text and the information given in the text better if it is introduced in a certain rhythm. Cranmer claims it is thanks to the rhythm and the melody that songs are so memorable because they transfer words, idioms and phrases into the long-term memory /Cranmer, 1992/.

The ability to feel and perceive music and the rhythm is given to everyone biologically and that’s why music is so universal. Music can help language learners

to learn good pronunciation and intonation. Fluency is efficiently trained when students learn the lyrics (the text) by heart and sing the song.

However, we must understand that songs simply work as an additional teaching aid and only with a well-planned curriculum songs can represent a good support in a language teaching/learning course.

Teachers should remember that each class is different and the same song and the same activity that works for one class may not work for another one. Thus, we should take several factors into consideration while choosing a song for the class. Griffie talks about 4 categories: the class, the teacher, classroom opportunities, and the music. He also points out, that the number of students in the class, their age, level of English, their musical interests, and also the time of day are very important /Griffie, 1992/.

There are many explanations why music is so influential. Griffie /1992/ states that songs have a great power to influence our feelings and they make the listeners feel and understand the message behind the lyrics and the melody. They can then easily identify with the lyrics and connect the meaning of the song to their own personal experience. Songs can evoke strong emotional associations.

Oxford Dictionary defines music as “the sounds of voices or instruments arranged in a pleasing way” /Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2009: 606/. The word “pleasing” is a very important part of this definition as it emphasizes the emotional influence that music has on people.

It “intensifies human’s feelings” (mostly in a positive way) as it is defined by Oxford Dictionary and people have various reasons for listening to music. Some people state that listening to music makes them feel more positive and puts them in a better mood. This statement is proved by the famous ancient philosopher Plato who once said: “Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places” /<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/455835-musical-training-is-a-more-potent-instrument-than-any-other/>.

Thus, taking into consideration all the above mentioned we state that songs can be a valuable source of new vocabulary for students. Lyrics of songs provide new words in a meaningful context. Teachers can use songs in various ways and students can guess the meaning of the new words either from the song itself or through the exercises and with some potential help from the teacher. We should also mention that listening skill is the skill which people most associate with songs and, certainly, songs are very good tools to develop the students’ listening skills.

According to a song-lesson plan, listening activities can be divided into three main groups: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening exercises. Most of the pre-listening and post-listening activities are communicative and are meant to develop speaking skills.

We use pre-listening tasks and activities to prepare students for the main listening. These activities serve several aims. They can either activate students' knowledge of a particular topic or can provide them with necessary information before the actual listening, or motivate them for the actual listening. Richards and Renandya /2002/ mention that there are two main aims of pre-listening activities. Motivation is very important as it enhances the students interest in the text. Another important factor is predicting and it makes an essential part of the pre-listening activity. According to Rizvi“ predictions are mostly made on the basis of “the title, subtitles, visual aids used by the student at the beginning of the talk” /Rizvi, 2005: 78/.

While-listening activities are completed by students during the listening process and they are related to the text of the song. You should allow students to look at the lyrics before the listening activity and give them some time to get acquainted with the topic. While-listening exercises are divided into two main groups:

- a) listening for a gist,
- b) focused listening, i.e. listening for a particular piece of information.

The aim of listening for a gist is to get the main point of the text the students are listening to. It includes , for example just the topic of the song, the idea of who is speaking or whether there is more than one speaker. Students do not need to understand every single word to be able to complete this activity. It is important for the teacher to emphasize that it is not necessary to understand every word as it is possible to get the main message without understanding all the words. This kind of exercise is suitable for presenting a new topic and as an introductory part for further activities.

In contrast to listening for a gist, focused listening concentrates on more detailed pieces of information. This requires a much deeper level of understanding as students need to focus their attention to particular details. The most common example of a focused listening exercise is a gap-fill, where students listen for particular words. Other types of exercises often include filling in tables, graphs, or checking words which occur in lyrics.

Some songs can be acted out as role-plays. Based on the song, students divide their roles and think of suitable dialogues to act out the meaning of the song. At the end of the song-lesson the teacher asks the students to write a story based on the lyrics of the song using the active vocabulary.

Besides the teacher can ask the students to write a letter from or to the singer or a character in the song. They could also write a few extra verses themselves. Students like the activity when the teacher gives them only one half of the song and asks them to predict and write what the other half would be.

Modern foreign language teaching methodology has developed an abundance of resources, applications and techniques that may facilitate learning languages at different ages, in various learning contexts. In our practice during the pandemic we used some online language-teaching tools and resources such as **Tubequizzard**, **Lyrics Training**, **My English pages**, which provide the learners with songs and different types of quizzes based on the lyrics of the song.

**Tubequizzard** is a tool that generates listening - decoding quizzes based on subtitled Youtube videos.

Tubequizzard should be used after the actual listening activity. The teacher offers students to listen to a song chosen on Youtube and transferred to Tubequizzard, then the students do the gap-filling exercises that the application creates based on the lyrics of the song. This activity provides effective practice of listening skills. It helps not only to develop listening abilities but it can also be easily adapted to practice vocabulary or certain grammatical structures. Tubequizzard can focus either on particular vocabulary in the lyrics or a specific word-class (e.g. verbs, adverbs, prepositions, etc.) The tool gives the teacher a variety of options from which he or she can choose and practice different lexical and grammatical structures with students.

**Lyricstraining.com** website offers the chance to improve English while listening to the students' favourite songs. Students choose a song, listen to it and complete the lyrics. The website has several tools, such as selecting the genre of the song, level of English, also students can repeat the line of the song as many times as needed to capture the right word combination. When using lyricstraining.com, another distinguishable feature can be noticed, it has the assortment of languages that can be altered.

Post-listening activities may serve as follow-up activities to the listening. Students should use what they have learnt and integrate it into their basic knowledge. These are usually speaking activities, discussions, and debates on the topic. Post-listening activities allow students to revise the vocabulary and the grammatical structures used in the text they have just listened to. According to Richards and Renandya "the teacher should ask learners to infer the meaning of new words from the contexts in which they appear – just as they do in reading. The procedure is to write the target words on the board, replay the sentences containing them, and ask learners to work out their meaning" /Richards&Renandya, 2002: 245/. Just like the pre-listening exercises, post-listening exercises together with the listening skills develop students' speaking and writing skills.

Based on our experience we can surely state that songs can represent a very suitable tool in language learning and can be quite useful in language acquisition. Songs can be used to practise any of the main language skills. Teaching songs with the help of contemporary online applications and resources develop not only

students' listening skills, they also enhance other skills such as speaking, writing, reading. Besides, due to songs and music students get more motivated as they consider songs to be fun and the motivation they get is in fact much more effective than what the ordinary exercises in their textbooks can give. Music can relax and stimulate students for learning. Playing a song immediately affects class atmosphere. Practice shows that students may learn more vocabulary and grammar structures through songs and songs are a highly accessible source of authentic language. And last but not the least, references in lyrics provide a means to integrate cultural dimensions in a lesson.

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**Ն. ԹՈՎԱՄԱՍՅԱՆ, Ն. ՂԱԶԱՐՅԱՆ – Երգերի դերը հաղորդակցական մեթոդով օտար լեզուների դասավանդման մեջ.** – Օտար լեզվի դասավանդման մեջ երգերը կարող են ծառայել որպես նոր բառապաշարի որոշակի ենթատեքստերում կիրառման հրաշալի աղբյուր: Նրանք նաև օգնում են առավել արդյունավետ ձևավորել և ընկալել քերականական կառույցները: Սույն հոդվածում քննարկվում են երգերով օտար լեզվի ուսուցման դասերի համար մշակված վարժություններ և հանձնարարություններ, որոնք կնպաստեն նյութի յուրացմանը, բառապաշարի ավելի հեշտ մտապահելուն, ինչպես նաև բանավոր խոսքի հղկմանը: Ներկայացվում են նաև մի շարք առցանց հարթակներ և գործիքներ, որոնց կիրառմամբ՝ երգերով օտար լեզվի ուսուցման դասերը դառնում են դյուրին, հետաքրքիր և ակտիվ:

**Բանալի բառեր.** օտար լեզվի ուսուցում, հաղորդակցական մեթոդ, երգեր, նոր բառապաշար, համատեքստ, քերականական կառույցներ, առցանց հարթակներ, ռեսուրսներ

**Н. ТОВМАСЯН, Н. КАЗАРЯН – Роль песен в изучении иностранных языков.** – Песня как один из видов речевого общения служит источником новых слов и выражений и является средством расширения словарного запаса учащихся. В песнях новая лексика встречается в определенном контекстуальном окружении, что помогает её активизации. Песни также способствуют лучшему усвоению грамматических конструкций. В статье выделяются некоторые преимущества использования песен при изучении английского языка, представляются задания и методы, которые рекомендуются применять во время уроков. В статье также представлены онлайн ресурсы и материалы, с помощью которых более эффективно активизируется и закрепляется лексико-грамматический материал, вводимый посредством песен.

**Ключевые слова:** обучение иностранным языкам, коммуникативный метод, песни, новая лексика, контекст, грамматические конструкции, онлайн платформы, ресурсы

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