

THE USE OF SONG LYRICS IN TEACHING LISTENING (A Case Study of Junior High School Grade 8 in Bandung)

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Abstract: This research entitled The Use of Song Lyrics in Teaching Listening (A Case Study of Junior High School Grade 8 in Bandung) was aimed at investigating the students' response toward the use of song lyrics during the teaching of listening, and the challenges faced by the teacher and students in using song lyrics in listening class. This research employed qualitative method by involving a case study in one of junior high school in Bandung. The data were obtained through classroom observation and questionnaire. The data from classroom observation were obtained from video recording, student's checklist and teacher's field notes during the teaching program. The data analysis were presented in a form of descriptive explanation, and then the data collected from questionnaire were analyzed and summarized by using the frequency table, represented in graphs, then described the phenomenon found. The findings of this study showed the use of song lyrics as an effective technique for teaching listening. Significantly, it can be seen that the students enjoyed their listening activity. As a result, they responded positively and enthusiastically to the lesson, and engaged easily in the whole learning process.

Keywords: *song lyrics, case study, listening*

Introduction

English has been recognized as being an important language for international communications. Foreign language learning can be considered from the four aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Hsu, et al. (2013) among these aspects, listening is an important capability of social interactions, and it has been found that people receive new messages more efficiently via listening than reading. The vital role of listening in communication

begins with the recognition that listening is the first language skill to be acquired (Wolvin, 2009). In his study, he found that people listen for as much as 55% of their day.

Listening skill is essential for learning since they enable students to acquire information and knowledge, and to achieve success in communicating with others. Teachers can show students why good listening is useful and even crucial in some situations. Poor listening can lead to

unnecessary arguments and problems. Teachers typically use an auditory method of teaching because they assume that students know how to listen. But, this case does not assume that their students know how to listen. According to English (2009) listening skill in many classrooms are taught with the traditional classroom setting with rows of desks and chairs symbolic of the type of learning that is based in passive listening. It is important to teacher to find another way in teaching listening skill that suitable with students' interest, one of the techniques is by using music or song.

The use of music and song in the English language-learning classroom is not new. It has been proven by many researchers that music and songs become one of the effective ways in English classroom. According to Brand and Li (2009) teachers of English as a second language (ESL) from around the globe enthusiastically report contributions to music education about their successful use of music and associated song lyrics with students. Various teaching methods are used to teach ESL learners and, according to research, music is the most important method to enhance the learning of ESL (Horn, 2007, p.7).

There are several reasons that songs might be helpful for learners. Young

learners enjoy music activities. Music activities help the learners to relax and are beneficial in learning a second language. Brand & Li (2009) advocated that using song lyrics in helping to create a natural speaking environment that more closely to the intercultural communication skills is necessary for students to understand English and to be understood by others. Song lyrics are embedded within a culture, its values, symbols, and beliefs. Thus, according to them, exposure to song lyrics also teaches vocabulary, grammar, rhythmic speech, phrases, and meanings.

However, songs can present a problem, particularly with teenage students; because it is often difficult to know exactly which songs the students like at any particular time, and which songs, very popular last week have suddenly gone (Harmer, 2007, p.320). So, this study is conducted to seek the response of the EFL students toward using song in teaching listening and investigate some challenges that faced by teacher when using songs in teaching listening in the classroom.

Literature Review

This part explores the fundamental literatures related to the teaching of listening skill by using song lyrics.

- **The Nature of Listening**

Listening is an important medium of information gathering in our life. In addition, listening is the language activity that is used most frequently. As said by Cahyono & Widiati (2009) a new-born baby will first listen to the voices and sounds in his or her environment in order to internalize linguistic input, before he or she speaks and learns to read and write. It has been estimated by Wolvin (2012) that people listen for as much as 55% of their day. The primacy of listening is not just a matter of time on the task. Moreover, Brown (2010) affirms that people do listening than speaking. Hsu et.al. (2013) mentions that listening is an important capability of social interactions, and it has been found that people receive new messages more efficiently via listening than reading. From four aspect of skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), listening is naturally considered as the primary skill in the acquisition of the native (first) language (Cahyono & Widiati, 2009, p.194).

- **The Teaching of Listening Skill**

Listening is a basic skill in first language acquisition and is crucial in English as Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) learning. According to Wolvin (2012) listening has been identified as one

of the most used and one of the most important communication skills in personal, academic, and professional settings alike. The vital role of listening in communication begins with the recognition that listening is the first language skill to be acquired. Given the concepts related to listening, it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. It is not only for communicative goal of language teaching but also when they use the language outside the classroom as well.

- **The Role of Song Lyrics in Language Learning**

According to Brand & Li (2009), there are several reasons that songs, particularly pop songs, might be helpful for second-language learners. Besides that, Wray & Perkins (2000) have suggested that most speech in song is the repetition and variation of memorized formulas and that these formulaic lexical phrases are flexible and therefore allow for many repetitions. Distinctive intonation, rhythmic and stress patterns that found in songs, making it easier for the learner to remember and apply.

According to Millington (2011) songs can be used for a number of purposes and there are many reasons why songs can be considered a valuable pedagogical tool. Lopera (2003) mentions some reasons why

teachers should take songs to a teaching context. First, music has to do with social context. Second it may change students' mood. Third, it provides stimulation and entertainment as well as challenge and pleasure. Fourth, music maybe associated with happiness because it brings people's remembrances and dreams. Finally, most teachers agree that music is a powerful tool to learn English.

Methodology

In order to answer the initial research questions, this study employed qualitative method by involving a case study. A case study is different from the experimental study in some ways. The difference is that the experimental study typically involves comparing two or more groups, while a case study involves a single individual or group, and does not attempt to set up experimental and control groups. This is supported by Emilia (2005) who states that a case study design is employed in "a small scale, a single scale". Focus on one particular instance of educational experience or practice.

- **Sample**

For the purpose of the study and in an attempt to answer the research questions, 38 students of second grade in a Junior High

School in Bandung were selected as the sample of the research. They are native Indonesian, they age are around 14, and most of them just learn English at school.

- **Data Collection**

There were some steps and instruments used in gaining the data to reveal the answer of the research questions. The data were collected through several instruments namely: classroom observation and questionnaires. The research was conducted along with the regular schedule in the school. The data were collected in three weeks.

Classroom observation is one of the characteristics in a case study. In this study, observation was used to gain the data during the implementation of using songs in teaching listening skill that include students' behavior. The classroom observations were conducted six times. The type of observation in this study was participant observation (Merriam 1991, cited in Sugiyono, 2009) since the researcher took part as the teacher who used song lyrics in teaching listening.

The questionnaire used to collect data about participants' perceptions on methods of learning English by using song lyrics. It was aimed to confirm and strengthen the data gained from the observation in the classroom. The

questionnaire is administered to all of the students after accomplished the method of songs in English class, to find out the students' responses to the use of English songs. Since the students are Indonesian, the questionnaire was adapted and translated in *Bahasa Indonesia* before administering the questionnaire to avoid misunderstanding to the students.

- **Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, the gained data from video transcription, students' checklist and teacher's field notes were analyzed by the researcher. The data analysis is presented in a form of descriptive explanation. Teacher's field notes and student's checklist were very useful to comprehend teacher's belief in carrying out the lesson plans. To fully understand, teacher's field notes and student's checklist were read over and over again, categorized into several aspects related to the research questions and it was also paired with relevant theories. Then, the data from the video recording was analyzed differently. There were several steps to analyze and identify the obtained data from video recording, such as transcribing, coding the data, and summarizing the result.

The data collected from questionnaire were analyzed and

summarized by using the frequency table, then represented by graphs, to make a conclusion about the correlation between the results of the questionnaire and the result transcribed of the video transcriptions, teacher's field note and student's checklist, in order to seek the students' response and result toward the use of song lyrics in their listening classroom.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The data acquired from observation was used in form of teacher field notes, students' checklist, and video transcriptions. These three data enclosed specific behaviors of students and learning circumstances conducted by the writer during the teaching activities. The following are the data acquired from teacher field notes, students' checklist, and video transcriptions related to the responses towards the use of songs in learning activities. After the data were analyzed, coded, and categorized, then the writer classified their responses into two types; positive and negative responses. The summary of the students' responses can be seen as follows:

Table 1 Students' Responses

Students' Responses	Stages																							
	Questioning						Observing						Exploring						Associating					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enthusiastic	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X
Attractive	√	X	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	X
Distracted	X	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Reluctant	X	√	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Silent	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Confused	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(+) AS	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
(-) AS	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X

Notes:

(+) AS = Longer Attention Span

(-) AS = Shorter Attention Span

From the table above, the students showed their positive responses during meeting one, three, five and six in which almost in every stages of learning activities they were enthusiastic and showed attractiveness to the listening activity. They were also engaged with the listening activity that the teacher provided in every stage. The students' responses towards the use of songs in teaching listening were dominated by enthusiasm and attractiveness. They were enthusiastic in every stages of learning process. They were really enthusiastic when they knew they would listen to the song in their activity. However, in the first meeting, the students were still confused with the learning tasks that were given by the teacher, because such learning activity was new for them. But, the teacher could handle this problem by giving clear instructions and repeating the instructions, and also providing the example.

The students were interested with the song because they had already known the song. It happened because this song was the popular song of the month and became trending topic among teenagers. So, one of the factors of successful teaching with songs is because the songs is familiar with the students from their daily life, and the students had already known the song and

they also know the vocabulary of the lyrics. The success of listening instruction is determined by a number of factors, one of which is the types of materials. According to Harmer (2007), the material available outside the classroom (e.g., radio, TV, personal computer, the Internet) can be used for extensive listening. Their familiarity with the songs given is likely due to the fact that they use various media to listen to songs outside the classroom.

However, some of the students started to show their negative responses in two ways. First, some of them tend to be reluctant, gave their negative attention and became less enthusiastic when they found that the songs were not interested. It was proven in day two when the song lyrics presented in which some of the students, particularly male students thought that song entitled Human by Christina Perri was song for girl and too mellow. Second, some of them tend to be confused and frustrated when they should accomplish the task that hard for them. It happened in the second meeting that the students had a task of rearranging the jumbled lyrics based on the song they heard. The teacher repeated the song four times until they could finish their work.

Teaching English by using songs' lyrics is really useful and fit the students characteristics, especially for students in grade junior high school, that were included into young learners category. Song lyrics can help increase the students' interest and motivate them to learn the target language. Students often think of song lyrics as means of entertainment rather than studying tools, therefore learning English through song lyrics is fun and enjoyable. However, using song lyrics in the classroom is not an easy way to do. Teacher and students commonly find some difficulties in using songs' lyrics in the students' learning activities, such as preparing the multimedia, less effective class condition, and the language used in the songs.

For the students, learning through song lyrics were rewarding because song lyrics could help them to cope with range of learning materials. They could expand their knowledge related to the theme of the song lyrics. By using song lyrics in the classroom, the students developed intrinsic motivation that stimulates their feeling and gave them the desire to learn. By engaging in a pleasurable experience, learners became more relaxed and more attentive than usual, therefore more receptive to learn. Furthermore, songs could sustain students'

attention and enthusiasm because it makes them feel less frustrating than learning with conventional way.

However, using song lyrics in the classroom is not an easy way to do. Teacher and students commonly find some difficulties in using song lyrics in the students' learning activities, such as: (1) the availability of multimedia, (2) students' limited vocabulary and (3) the selected song lyrics used in the classroom. The findings reveal that some students faced the difficulty in finding the exact word of the songs. The stress, rhythms, pronunciation, and intonation of the song are the factors that brought about the difficulties. Students' limited vocabulary became the other problem to consider in selecting the songs to be used in the classroom. It was because the learners learn English mostly with their native language as a medium of instructions. So, they had to make efforts in adjusting with the language used in the song lyrics. Therefore, the role of teacher was very important to help them overcome the difficulty encountered. To deal with this problem, teacher tried to present the topic which is interesting and appropriate with students' characteristics that would invite their full engagement in the classroom. Besides that, preparing the multimedia when

using song lyrics in the class was the common challenges faced at every stage. It was because the limited access to multimedia available in the class. During the second meeting, the teacher had already prepared the media such as speakers before the lesson began, but unfortunately, the digital projector availability at the school was strictly limited. Preparing the multimedia was time consuming. It was noted that the school only provide digital projector in some classrooms.

Conclusions

This study focused on the use of song lyrics in teaching listening at a junior high school. The purposes of this study were to investigate the students' response toward the use of song lyrics in their listening skill, and to find out the challenges faced by the teacher in using song lyrics in teaching listening.

The results of this research towards the using of song lyrics in teaching listening brought positive responses from the students. The data from teacher filed notes, students' checklist, and video transcription show that most of students gave their enthusiastic and attractive responses during the learning process by using song lyrics as the media of learning.

The findings of this study showed the use of song lyrics as an effective technique for teaching listening. Significantly, it can be seen that the students enjoyed their listening activity. As a result, they responded positively and enthusiastically to the lesson, and engaged easily in the whole learning process. However, using song lyrics in the classroom is not an easy way to do. Teacher and students commonly find some difficulties in using song lyrics in the students' learning activities.

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