ABSTRACT

Songs have become a good technique for English teachers to use in their classes because songs bring variety to the classroom and they also avoid that students get bored. In other words, students feel more motivated and interested in learning English language through songs in a more real context of communication. Students can also improve their pronunciation and vocabulary learning.

In view of this, our project was based on teaching vocabulary to six year olds through songs. This project began with an analysis of theories, approaches, characteristics of learners and important characteristics of songs too. All this information was an important base for our project because it supported our idea that using songs was a good way to teach vocabulary to little kids.

Then we started working with a group of eleven children who were attending second grade. According to these kids’ interests, needs, and abilities; we chose four songs corresponding to topics like: Farm Animals, Days of the Week, Numbers, and Colors. After the application of these songs in the English class we got important results which supported our idea that songs are a good technique to teach new words to six year olds.
It is our wish to share our experience with other English teachers and we know that our project will be an important and useful contribution to encourage teachers towards awareness that songs are a good tool to use in the English class because children will become more interested in learning this language in a more fun and pleasant way.

**Key words:** English, learning, songs, vocabulary, children.
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UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
ESCUELA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

Trabajo de Investigación previo a la obtención del Título de Licenciadas en la Especialidad de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

TEMA:
Teaching vocabulary through songs to six year olds.

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Cuenca-Ecuador
2011
GRATITUDE

We thank God and our parents for giving us the strength and the support to start and finish our career. We feel grateful with Mst. Genner Ochoa for helping us to develop this project.
DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated to my parents, the people who I love most in my life, because they have been my inspiration to accomplish my academic purposes.

Magaly Pacheco S.

My parents and my brother are the people whom I dedicate this Project because they have always been to my side giving me their love and support.

Jessica Segarra M.
INTRODUCTION

English has been taught in a formal way until few years ago. Nowadays, teachers, who are looking for a way to make classes easier, have found that songs are a good technique to teach English as a second language. At doing this, the transmission of knowledge has changed into a more real context of communication.

Songs make English learning a more efficient and pleasant activity because they are part of our daily experience.

The students have fun at singing and listening to songs because songs bring variety to the classroom and avoid monotony.

Songs help us to achieve important goals in the English Language Learning:

- Songs help the students to improve their vocabulary learning.
- They also improve students' pronunciation and intonation.

In consideration to these points, the purpose of our project has been to teach English vocabulary through songs. This project began with a theory analysis of approaches, techniques, characteristics of songs, etc in order to prove that songs are a good tool to teach vocabulary to six year olds.
With this purpose in mind, we have selected four songs corresponding to topics like: “Farm Animals, Days of the Week, Numbers, and Colors”, which have been applied in the classroom.

From this application we have gotten important results that support our idea that songs are a good tool to teach vocabulary to six year old children.

It is our hope that this project will become a good contribution to lead teachers towards awareness that songs are a good resource to apply in the classroom because so that children can learn English in a fun and more interesting way.
CHAPTER I

1.1 LEARNERS’ GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND THE MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE.

1.1.1 Learner diversity

Traditionally, whether in an explicit or an implicit manner, many learning contexts have been organized and many teachers have taught as if all learners were the same. One of the most significant advances in education in the last decades of the twentieth century has come from a considerable amount of research done in the area of learning styles which recognizes that the students in our classrooms have greatly different learning profiles.

Gardner’s research has shown that human cognitive ability is pluralistic rather than unitary and that learners of any subject will make greater progress if they have the opportunity to use their areas of strength to master the necessary material. He recommends that teachers use a wide variety of ways to deal with the subject because “genuine understanding is not likely to emerge and be apparent to others… if people possess a number of ways of representing knowledge of a concept or skill and can move readily back and forth among those forms”.
1.1.2 The holistic nature of learners

Gardner’s cognitive model proposes that human beings are multidimensional subjects that need to develop not only their more cognitive capacity but also other abilities as, for example, the physical, artistic, and spiritual. Traditionally, learning has often been considered only a cognitive activity, but if we take brain science into account, this consideration is inaccurate and educational and socially problematic.

1.1.3 The musical-rhythmic frame (Musical Intelligence)

The musical-rhythmic intelligence has to do with the ability to perceive and appreciate rhythm, pitch and melody. The use of music in the language classroom is not new. Rauscher, Shaw and Ky (1997) point to the effect of listening to music on the development of learners’ spatial temporal intelligence. It can be affirmed that the development of musical intelligence in the second language classroom can have benefits such as helping students to concentrate and connect with their inner self, stimulating creative processes, cutting out the black noise, that is to say, and eliminating distracting sounds from in or outside the classroom, and, above all, fostering a relaxed but motivating and productive classroom atmosphere.
1.2 APPROACHES

1.2.1 The Socio-Cultural Approach

Vigotsky focused on the connection between people and the social cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences. According to Vigotsky, humans use tools that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate their social environment. Initially, children develop these tools to serve solely as social functions, ways to communicate needs. Vigotsky believed that the internalization of these tools led to higher thinking skills.

Vigotsky’s approach consists in considering a person as the result of a historic and social process where the language plays an essential role. According to Vigotsky, knowledge is a process of interaction between the social and cultural environment.

1.2.2 Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR imperatives in teaching English as a foreign language in English Language Learning environment are seen as an important second language teaching method. TPR is one of the most important teaching approaches which can be adapted to a various number of teaching situations, and children really have fun doing it. It helps practicing vocabulary connected with actions, tenses, imperatives, and instructions; classroom language and even storytelling. It can be combined with the techniques of
singing and dancing; English songs and nursery rhymes for children should be included in almost every theme.

1.3 SIX YEAR OLDS: LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS.

- It’s very important to understand that children of 6 year olds have very limited vocabularies in their first languages. As such, the main focus with such young learners is not language production, but language comprehension. The children must not be pressure to speak... they will when they are ready.

- Six-year-olds have longer attention spans and continue to prefer structured activities to more open-ended experiences. They enjoy talking on new roles and responsibilities, but still require much direction from adults and frequently ask questions to ensure that they are completing tasks the right way.

- In terms of social and emotional development, six year olds are confident and delighted in showing off their talent. They start to display an increasing awareness of their own and others’ emotions and begin to develop better techniques for self-control. Six year-olds also draw emotional stability from their interaction with adults with whom they feel secure, particularly during challenging situations and circumstances.
A child’s development in the creative arts varies greatly based on the child’s experiences with art, music, dance, and theater. They can also remember the words and melodies to a number of songs and sing or play these songs on instruments. They can also be taught how to read music and write simple music notation. With dance, six year-olds can create, imitate, and explore movement in response to a musical beat. The dramatic play of six year-olds show greater creativity and complexity in the use of props, costumes, movements, and sounds. Children this age can also repeat simple text and cooperate with others in a dramatization.

1.4 SONGS

1.4.1 Songs for children.

All children love songs and like to repeat them again and again. Songs are repetitive, they have natural rhythm and they have an element of fun, of playing with the language. Children play with language in their modern tongue, so this is a familiar part of their world, and it has an important part to play in their learning process.
1.4.2 Characteristics of songs.

1.4.2.1 Pronunciation:

A song is a wonderful tool to teach pronunciation and new vocabulary to children. They can pay attention to new words, its pronunciation, and the different sounds of the lyrics.

1.4.2.2 Vocabulary:

Songs help to memorize language because of repetition. Children can learn new words and work on different aspects of songs. Besides, they encourage starting a discussion or a debate.

1.4.3 The Value of Music

By using music in the ESL classroom, students practice their listening skills and increase their cultural knowledge. Almost any song can be used in the ESL classroom. Popular music can be employed in the same way as children’s rhymes. The pronunciation and rhythm lessons are the same as for the children’s songs and the lessons may help students become more interested in different types
1.5 THE CONTRIBUTION OF SONGS TO ENGLISH.

Children learn songs quickly because these are designed specially to be listened, thanks to its double component: language and melody. There are two reasons to use songs at teaching English; these can be psychological and pedagogical:

1.5.1 Psychological Reasons:

- Songs help to acquire language due to involuntary repetition.
- Songs remain on children’s mind.
- Music and songs are present in our environment, being part of our lives.
- Children like to listen to their own voices.
- Listening to songs is not a difficult activity; nevertheless, it’s a relaxing activity for children.
- Songs are more motivating than other traditional activities.

1.5.2 Pedagogical and Methodological Reasons

- Children enjoy singing because songs are very motivating.
- Songs bring variety to our classes.
- The distance between teachers and students gets shorter.
- Songs are good to practice language, vocabulary, and pronunciation.
• There is an improvement in skills of listening, attention, and concentration and other aspects related to pronunciation and intonation.

1.5.3 The importance of using songs in the classroom.

Language teachers can and should use songs as part of their classroom teaching repertoire.

1. Songs almost always contain authentic, natural language.
2. A variety of new vocabulary can be introduced to students through songs.
3. Songs are usually very easy obtainable.
4. Songs can be selected to suit the needs and interests of the students.
5. Grammar and cultural aspects can be introduced through songs.
6. Time length is easily controlled,
7. Students can experience a wide range of accents.
8. Song lyrics can be used in relating to situations of the world around us.
9. Students think songs are natural and fun.
1.5.4 Play music to introduce new language.

Songs are a great way to teach new language to students. Even when children do not fully understand the lyrics, they will be excited to sing. Songs with simple lyrics that kids can dance and do gestures to, the children sing and learn so quickly.

When you are singing and dancing, you interact with language in so many ways. You are practicing listening, comprehension, you are vocalizing, and you are interpreting the languages with movement… and all in a way that is fun and non-threatening to young learners.

1.6 BENEFITS OF ENGLISH SONGS FOR CHILDREN LEARNING EFL

1.6.1 Enhance language skills

Language skills are increased when vocabulary, grammar, and syntax are learned through songs. In the same way that children all over the world implement simple songs to learn the animals, days of the week, and numbers or colors, songs can be used to help ESL students memorize phrases and words set to a melody.

1.6.2 Fluency and natural English

Songs rely on the concept that hearing a language is one of the best ways to learn it. They present the rhymes of language in a way that encourages fluency.
1.6.3 Listening in the classroom

It is quite clear that listening is the skill that children acquire first, especially if they have not yet learned to read. When the pupils start to learn a foreign language, it is going in mainly through their ears and what the pupils hear is their main source of the language. It is important to give them as much as visual back-up as possible through facial expression, through movement, through mime, and through pictures.

1.6.4 Listening and Repeating Songs

Listening and repeating songs are great fun and give the pupils the chance to get a feel for the language: the sounds, the stress and rhythm and the intonation.

When done in combination with movements or with objects or pictures, this type of activity also helps to establish the link between words and meaning.

1.6.5 Multiple Intelligences

Auditory learners will find songs to be the perfect learning tool. Actions can be easily integrated into singing time for kinesthetic and tactile learners, and visual learners can also benefit from watching the group using actions or by the implementation of flashcards.
CHAPTER II

2.1 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

2.1.1 Witness Group

The group to research that we studied was integrated by eleven children (3 girls and 8 boys) at “Senderitos del Saber” Elementary School in Cuenca. These children were six year olds and attended the second grade level. Considering that children of this age cannot write yet their learning would be based on what they saw and listened.

This group of children attended the English class three times a week for about 45 minutes each lesson. Our research was developed in a period of five weeks.

2.1.2 Songs selection

The first step in our project was to select some songs for children to work with in order to acquire new vocabulary. It is important to mention that the vocabulary of all the songs presented to the students had short and easy words that guaranteed the students' learning. The songs were chosen considering the students’ age, ability, and interests. During this time, the children learned the vocabulary corresponding to:
• “Down on the Farm” (Cow, Sheep, Pig, Goat, Horse, Chicken, Duck, and Dog)
• “Days of the Week” (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday)
• “Numbers” (One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten)
• “Electric Colors” (Red, Green, Yellow, and Blue)

2.2 TEACHING TECHNIQUES

2.2.1 Making English songs for children work in the classroom.

1. To start, use games and flashcards to teach the key vocabulary included in the song that will be used.

2. Preview the song by playing it during the vocabulary teaching sessions and gradually implement listening games, where children can point to or hold up a card when they hear a specific word.

3. Play the song only two or three times per session to keep it fresh and interesting.

4. Add actions to the song if possible. Let the students help to brainstorm for actions to describe vocabulary words, and implement them in the song for a performance all can participate in.

5. After the song is learned to perfection, have the class perform for another class or a teacher and parent group. Then move on to a new song.
2.3 APLICATION PROCESS

There are various ways of using songs in the classroom. The level of the students, the interests and the age of the learners the song itself have determinant roles on the procedure. Apart from them, it mainly depends on the creativity of the teacher.

2.3.1 First week: Animals

At the beginning of the first lesson, children established a connection between the object of study (a flashcard for each animal; see appendix 1) and the pronunciation of each word that would be done several times along with the teacher. Once that the children had familiarized with the new vocabulary, the teacher incorporated the song: “Down on the farm”.

**Procedure to present the song**

1. The students repeat the words and phrases after the teacher, as many times as necessary.
2. The song is played for the students to listen.
3. Then they sing along with the teacher.
4. They sing the song by themselves.
DOWN ON THE FARM

Let’s go down to the farm
And see the animals
Can you see a cow
Can you see a sheep
Can you see a pig
Can you see a goat
Moo moo goes the cow
Baa baa goes the sheep
Oink Oink goes the pig
Maa maa goes the goat
Down on the farm
Let’s go down to the farm
And see the animals
Can you see a horse

Can you see a chicken

Can you see a duck

Can you see a dog

Neigh neigh goes the horse

Cluck cluck goes the chicken

Quack quack goes the duck

Woof woof goes the dog

Down on the farm

Let's go down to the farm

And see the animals

Let's go down to the farm

And see the animals
During the third lesson of the week, children were evaluated. To this end, some teddy-bears were laid under the children’s chairs. Each student had to take the teddy-bear from under the chair, show it to the class and say the name of the animal.

They exchanged the toys and said his/her classmates’ animal name.

2.3.2 Second week: Days of the week

On the second session we started a new topic. Children were asked to see a foam-worm that was pasted on the wall. The foam-worm’s body had seven circles and each one of them represented a day of the week. Each circle of the foam-worm represented a day of the week, but this time the word is presented in English. (see appendix 2) We took advantage of this material to introduce the new topic. The students practiced the pronunciation of each word several times along with their teacher. Then the teacher presented the song: “Days of the week”.

Procedure to present the song

1. The students repeat the words and phrases after the teacher, as many times as necessary.
2. The song is played for the students to listen.
3. Then they sing along with the teacher.
4. They sing the song by themselves.
DAYS OF THE WEEK

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Thursday, Friday, Saturday

These are the days of the week, the days of the week

Which day is your favorite day?

Sunday is the start of the week

Then comes Monday, Tuesday too

Wednesday is the middle of the week

Thursday, Friday, Saturday too

These are the days of the week, the days of the week

Which day is your favorite day?

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Thursday, Friday, Saturday

These are the days of the week, the days of the week
Which day is your favorite day?

At the end of the class period, the students had to demonstrate that they really learned the days of the week. They were given a small foam-worm puzzle to each one, and they had to put the different parts of the worm’s body in order according to the pattern they had just seen and the related vocabulary, that is to say the days of the week.

2.3.3 Third week: Numbers

At the beginning of the third lesson we presented flashcards having the numbers from 1 to 10. The students repeated the number after the teacher. Then only the flashcards were shown and they said the number. Corrections were made along.

Procedure to present the song

1. The students repeat the words and phrases after the teacher, as many times as necessary.
2. The song is played for the students to listen.
3. Then they sing along with the teacher.
4. They sing the song by themselves.
NUMBERS

One one, one two three
One one, one two three
One one, one two three
One two three four….
One two three four.

Four four, four five six
Four four, four five six
Four four, four five six
Four five six seven…
Four five six seven.

Seven seven, seven eight nine
Seven seven, seven eight nine
Seven seven, seven eight nine
Seven eight nine ten…

That was great!

Oh, thank you.

Can I sing too?

Okay, here we go!

One more time…

At the end, the students were evaluated by using rods. The teacher had on her desk 10 rods having the number (from 1 to 10) on the top of each rod. The teacher asked the student to pick up a certain number. Once that he had picked up the right number he had to say the number aloud. The procedure was repeated until most of students could perform the task appropriately.

2.3.4 Fourth week: Colors

At the beginning of the fourth lesson, the teacher showed the students some balloons of different colors and pronounced the color of each one of them. (See appendix 4) This way, the children got familiarized with the new vocabulary. Then the song “Electric Colors” was played.
Procedure to present the song

1. The students repeat the words and phrases after the teacher, as many times as necessary.
2. The song is played for the students to listen.
3. Then they sing along with the teacher.
4. They sing the song by themselves.

ELECTRIC COLORS

Red red red, it’s red

Red red red red

Green green green, it’s green

Green green green green

Yellow yellow yellow, it’s yellow

Yellow yellow yellow yellow

Blue blue blue, it’s blue

Blue blue blue blue
Red, It’s red

Green, It’s green

Yellow, It’s yellow

Blue, It’s blue

Red, green, yellow, blue.

This activity was evaluated at the school yard. The teacher gave each student a balloon of a different color. Those balloons were blowed up with helium. She asked the students to let their balloons go, depending on the color that she pronounced. Each child said the color of the balloon that he/she had.
CHAPTER III

3.1 EVALUATION PROCESS

3.1.1 Collecting data

The tool that we chose to collect data was a checking list to register the information about the students’ correct recognition and pronunciation of the words.

3.1.2 Processing the information

After analyzing the checking list corresponding to the song: “Down to the Farm”, we found out that 9 of students who represents an 82% did not embarrassed at singing this song. It was fun for them because children enjoyed it along with their classmates and their teacher. These children also had studied at this school since two years ago, so they felt confident with the teacher, the classmates, and the environment of the school. On the other hand, two children that correspond to an 18% could not acquire these words at all.

"Down on the Farm"
In the song: “Days of the Week” 8 children that correspond to a 73% acquired the vocabulary corresponding to this topic. Since the students liked this song and the foam-worm activity they became engaged with the words that represented each day of the week. While 3 children that correspond to a 27% could not remember all the words at the moment they were evaluated.

![Pie chart showing 73% and 27% for yes and no, respectively.]

The song: “Numbers” showed us that the 100% of children really mastered the vocabulary. Children loved this song because the rhythm was funny for them. The words were short and easy to pronounce. There was a lot of repetition of the words corresponding to the numbers within this song.
Through “Electric Colors” Song, 100% of children learned all the words. The students could pronounce the short and easy words very well. There also was a lot of material that was used as a complement to help the children to recognize each color. This was the most interesting activity for the kids. They loved to work with objects, the song, and the colorful balloons at the end of the lesson.
3.1.3 Interpreting Results

After applying songs to teach vocabulary to six year olds, from the information gathered have come to the following conclusions.

The technique was productive because an average 89% of the children learned the vocabulary involved in the activities.

We feel pleased with the results that we obtained from the application of our project. Most of the songs really worked in the English class because the vocabulary could be acquired by the students in a fun, easy, and interesting way.
CHAPTER IV

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

Since teaching is a developing art, which requires innovative and creative ideas to enrich its effectiveness, we must not hesitate to use such new techniques like songs in our classrooms. These resources can assist our teaching of vocabulary while providing a relaxed atmosphere which motivates students.

Songs entertain and relax the learners while they are learning or practicing a structure, and they often eliminate the student’s negative attitude towards learning. As English teachers, we can benefit from using songs, since our concern is to motivate the students and draw their utmost attention on the songs during teaching.

We must try to choose songs that are clear, not too fast, memorable, likely to appeal to our learners and easy to create activities for, depending on the area of pronunciation we are focusing on.

By using song in the classroom, the EFL student is able to practice grammar and vocabulary points, but more importantly, they are exposed to how the native speaker uses the language casually and artistically.
4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that teachers should design more interesting tasks and create a pleasant atmosphere in order to avoid frustration and tensions for students. To arouse passion for learning is essential but difficult. Using songs may be an effective way to teach vocabulary and pronunciation.

A teacher’s selection of a technique or a set of techniques should be based on his or her objectives for the classroom. After deciding the grammar point to be studied, and the song and the techniques to be used, the teacher should prepare an effective lesson plan. Since songs are listening activities, it is advisable to present them as a listening lesson, but of course it is necessary to integrate all the skills in the process in order to achieve successful teaching.

After choosing a suitable song, teachers have to think of how to design appropriate tasks and activities to students’ level and their interest as well. It is better for teachers to motivate students by singing as a model or simply by singing together with them. If teachers sing with wrong rhythm, they may lose confidence or be laughed at by their students.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

ANIMALS

COW
SHEEP
pig
GOAT
DOG
APPENDIX 2

THE DAYS OF THE WEEK
APPENDIX 3

THE NUMBERS

ONE
2
TWO
Six
Seven
9

NINE
APPENDIX 4

COLORS

YELLOW
RED
GREEN
PICTURES
CHECKING LIST

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: "SENDERITOS DEL SABER"

Elementary School Level:  Second Grade

REGISTER OF INFORMATION

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CHECKING LIST

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: "SENDERITOS DEL SABER"

Elementary School
Level: Second Grade

REGISTER OF INFORMATION

Second Week: "Days of the Week"

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<td>Ma. Christina Morocho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean Carlos Pesáñez</td>
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<td>David Torres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pablo Torres</td>
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**CHECKING LIST**

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: "SENDERITOS DEL SABER"**

*Elementary School Level:* Second Grade

**REGISTER OF INFORMATION**

**Third Week: "The Numbers"**

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## CHECKING LIST

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: "SENDERITOS DEL SABER"

**Elementary School Level:** Second Grade

### REGISTER OF INFORMATION

**Fourth Week: "Electric Colors"**

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